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Cover picture

A detail of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's "La Danse"; it is reproduced from *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire*, which is reviewed opposite.

Breaking free of the system

Richard Dorment

ANNE MIDDLETON WAGNER
Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire
328pp. Yale University Press. £35.
0300036051

This is a genuinely original book, one of those rare works of art history that change the way we view not just the artist under discussion, but the art of the period. Rather than a monograph on Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, or his biography, Anne Wagner has written a methodical inquiry into the making of a sculptor and of sculpture in nineteenth-century France. Wagner relegates all the human interest to a four-page chronology preceding the thirty-one pages of footnotes at the end of the text: Carpeaux's notoriously unhappy private life is barely mentioned.

The mason's son is first seen as a sort of statistic, the inheritor of a well-defined professional tradition, destined from his birth in Valenciennes in 1827 to take his place somewhere among the huge, almost anonymous, army of sculptors - *statuaires, ornemanistes, sculpteurs sur bois* - as a marble carver, plaster worker, or even framemaker. Most of these men were working-class and started off in the provincial *écoles* or *académies*. There they learned the first elements of draughtsmanship, not from artists but from handbooks or drawing courses meant for boys studying to be artisans. Wagner discusses such handbooks in detail, working her way through page after page of disembodied eyes, noses and limbs because a boy like Carpeaux was taught that an eye or an elbow had only one shape - the shape the student could see for himself on the lithographed page. For youths who later became semi-skilled workers, this stultifying method worked perfectly well, but for those who became artists, it must have taken years of corrective drawing from life to learn to see nature as it is. Because it placed him within the educational system, this early training both set Carpeaux on the path to becoming an artist (indeed, a very great one) and constituted the earliest of the hurdles he would have to overcome before achieving anything like originality in his art.

After leaving the provincial academy it was not at all obvious where a young man would fit within the hierarchical system of education that had operated in France since the latter half of the eighteenth century. Like Carpeaux, he could attend the École Gratuite de Dessin in Paris (the Petite École), essentially a training ground for artisans where a hopeful sculptor might begin his studies but where, if he lacked either talent or capital, he would end up merely as a *praticien*, the man who carved the marble to the designs of the sculptor. On the other hand, if he was lucky he could go on to the École des Beaux-Arts where he might become a sculptor - an artist - who conceived the statue and received the glory. In theory and often in practice, all the sculptor did was to work out his subject and composition, model the plaster and leave pointer and *praticien* to get on with it: I had always believed, though Wagner does not confirm the story, that Carpeaux's allergy to marble dust kept him well away from his own statues. If this is not true, the point is that it could be.

The first chapters, examining the sculptor's training, provide information available in print for the first time in English and fill a huge gap in our knowledge of the course of instruction for any artist who went through the system. They explain both the reasons for French pre-eminence in sculpture in the nineteenth century and also the severe limitations that these educational methods imposed upon the sculptors themselves. The level of preparation - the study from casts, from life, in relief, in the round, in composition (but not in technique) - was so intense, so geared to force only the most dedicated to the forefront, that an artist with any technical competence was bound to emerge from the school's endless series of *concours* as a master. The system created generation after generation of men upon whom the State could call with perfect confidence to produce exactly the right statue for the right square or building.

There was no room here for isolated genius. Young sculptors all emerged from the École des Beaux-Arts thinking and sculpting alike. The system was also self-perpetuating. Only academics were allowed to criticize the students' works, and only the students of those same professors won the Prix de Rome and themselves became academics. Usually - if a prize were awarded at all - the least offensive statue would carry the day, and it was safest to strive for the exact middle, to conform but not too much. What is remarkable in reading this book and looking at its reproductions of the entries submitted by different artists for the same competition, is that we too begin to think like the Academy, using very much the same criteria as the original judges.

Wagner's thesis is that Carpeaux both typified and transcended the experience of the sculptor within a system designed to constrict him, from the moment that he picked up a pencil to the moment that he won the Prix de Rome and beyond. In removing the assumptions and myths of earlier biographers, she shows a working-class outsider clawing - not too strong a word - his way to the Prix de Rome. And in this desperation he was typical. If art was glorious, the profession of the sculptor was not. The line between sculptor and labourer was exceptionally thin, and failure at any one stage cast the artist into the worker's abyss. In pursuit of his goal Carpeaux dropped one master, the excellent François Rude, whose students did not win the Prix de Rome, in favour of Francisque Duret, a far less talented sculptor whose students did. He also cheated. In 1846 during the Prix de Rome competition he was caught hiding a set of (forbidden) tracings and expelled. Only mildly put out, and not remotely ashamed, he continued to enter year after year until he finally gained the prize in 1854, aged twenty-seven. He is shown here as ambitious, tough, and rather likeable, his hard education helping to form the man Edmond and Jules de Goncourt met in 1865 with two other (unnamed) sculptors:

They seemed to us sinister and impoverished. They had soft hats and the old overcoats of stagecoach travellers. Hands in their pockets, backs wedged up against pieces of furniture, they went on standing, like people who didn't know how to sit down. They had the voices of workers out in the world, the debased, mannered accent of some young comedian who pours out his words without being sure of their spelling, or of a pimp who rolls his r's. Everything about them breathed a lack of education... Their faces, pale and lined with poverty, seemed dirtied by rough stubble, the beads the people wear. In them could be read an indefinable wretchedness, a withdrawal, a past in the bohemian that embitters.

When the Goncourts wrote this passage, Carpeaux was already at the top of his profession, winner of the Prix de Rome, favourite of the Imperial family. Wagner asks how, exactly, he achieved this success. The catalyst seems to have been Carpeaux's imaginative, extravagant response to Italy. In discussing two early masterpieces from his Roman years, "Jeune Pêcheur à la coquille" (1859) and "Ugolin et ses fils" (1857-61) Wagner concentrates not on any vague notion of genius, but on inspiration, and specifically on his obsessive draughtsmanship, which Rome, and the statues he saw there, seemed to relax and set free. Page after

page of his notebook drawings are seen to have unfettered his imagination, allowing him to combine impossible poses and to experiment with extreme facial contortions on paper before attempting to work them out in plaster. He was thus able to think in far bolder - one wants to say more manic - images than his contemporaries, so many of whom were engaged in the production of warmed-over versions of the antique, exactly as they had been trained to do. And so, the "Jeune Pêcheur", his homage to his first master Rude's "Petit Pêcheur napolitain" (1833), owes its vitality to the sculptor's observation of the local inhabitants (Rude had not been to Italy when he carved his statue), emerging out of the pencil studies of Italian life in Carpeaux's notebooks. Where Rude's urchin, for all his charm, remains merely a model posing in a Parisian atelier, Carpeaux's is a real *lazzarone*, swinging his body, and letting his splayed fingers excitedly revolve the shell at his ear. By comparison with Rude's stiff figure, the marble flesh here seems sensuous and yielding.

In the sketchbooks we also find Carpeaux's studies after the old masters, and here an investigation into the sources of his "Ugolino" is particularly rewarding. Behind that remarkable statue lies Carpeaux's obsession with Michelangelo, and in particular with the Lorenzo de' Medici (1524-34) in the Medici Chapel. When he came to work out the composition for his own statue the process was, as it were, already in progress in the sketchbooks - drawings for "Ugolino" are found on the same page as studies after Michelangelo, and the two are charged and exciting.

Wagner argues that the freedom of the preliminary draughtsmanship accounts in part for the wilder excesses of the final group. Its meaning can more or less be worked out simply by looking at it, because the whole blood-curdling story of starvation and cannibalism is conveyed entirely through the dense anatomical tangle of the four figures. Ugolino's scrunched toes, awful grimace, fingers clawing at the face and gnawed by the teeth; the dead baby and dying adolescents; the limbs all intertwined like the Laocoön closed in upon itself: "Ugolin et ses fils" is, I suppose, the ultimate bad-taste statue; were it not so powerful it would be a joke. In fact, laughter - nervous laughter - was the reaction it provoked at the Salon, where the critics, finding that a textual source was unnecessary for understanding all the implications of the group, were unable to bring themselves to refer in print to the peculiarly unclean

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1120 pp. 0 521 24338 6 \$60.00 net

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England

crime of which Ugolino was guilty. Only the caricaturists felt distanced enough to spell it out.

Carpeaux obsessively pursued worldly success, and specifically the patronage of the emperor. At the height of his powers he produced a portrait of the Prince Imperial in which his intention was to strike a middle distance between public and private portrait. As a result the statue is so understated that it confused the critics and it too was ignored by them. Subsequently it failed to sell in reproduction. In her excellent discussion of its iconography, Wagner insists on the political dimension of a statue one thinks of as mainly characterized by a sort of wispy charm. The Prince is shown not in military uniform, lest he savour too much of the dictator he was being groomed to become, but as a bourgeois lad burdened with the care of people whom he was destined to rule – their equal, but better. Even the dog, Nero, plays his role, for he did not belong to the Prince but to his father, and in the statue he serves *in loco parentis*. This image of stability and security had to be carefully projected precisely because the boy's future was so hideously insecure: indeed, the government actually joined forces with Carpeaux to publish reductions of the statue in bronze and porcelain in order to disseminate the image of the Prince to French people, like a very superior Charles and Diana coffee mug. In this chapter we are introduced to Carpeaux's enthusiastic commercialization of his art, though Wagner does not choose to deal with the question of the sheer scale on which the sculptor and his atelier mobilized themselves to extend the reproduction of replicas after 1872. The Atelier Carpeaux was a business, pure and simple, employing a production manager, sales manager, publishing a catalogue with prices, advertising, exhibiting, and holding public auctions. At quite an early stage Carpeaux himself had very little to do with the production and marketing of his work, which was, moreover, carried on by his widow and heirs after his death, despite instructions in his will that the museum at Valenciennes be granted the right to cast and distribute his works, which were to "be reproduced and spread as widely as possible" for the benefit of those heirs. Wagner's discussion of the reproduction of the portrait of the Prince Imperial is relatively straightforward. But there are difficulties with other models, such as the "Jeune Pêcheur", of which so many kinds of casts and versions exist that, when confronted with one in marble, bronze or terracotta, it is rarely easy to understand what, precisely, we are looking at.

The best chapter in the book, and one that might almost have stood on its own as a title of the old art-in-context kind, is the penultimate, on "La Danse" (1865-9), formerly on the façade of Garnier's Opéra in Paris. The familiar leaping *Génie* encircled by dimpled, fat-bottomed dancers always seems to me the embodiment of Parisian high spirits – not so much those of *Gaieté Parisienne* as of that Cole Porter lyric about Paris being the place to start if your auntie wants to be a bachante. So it is surprising to learn that the outcry over its supposed indecency and impurity was taken seriously enough for Garnier to agree to remove it, and that only war with Prussia deflected attention from the scandal and so saved it from being sold to a Turkish collector of high-class pornography. A vandal flung ink on one of the dancers' jiggling thighs; the newspapers would not leave the subject alone; and Carpeaux himself – ever ready to capitalize – joined the circus by having the vandalized work photographed and the prints, stamped with his own atelier imprint, hawked around Paris.

Garnier wanted his façade infinitesimally enlivened with staid neo-classic groups with titles such as "La Musique Instrumentale". As Wagner remarks, what was called for was polite applause with gloved hands, not a quasi-revolutionary mob milling about under the statue after its unveiling. Why then did Carpeaux create a work so volubly original? It is possible, of course, that he was simply impressed by the notoriety of works like Clesinger's "Femme piquée par un serpent" (1847) or Pradier's "Saiyre et Bacchante" (1834) and set out to create an equally sensational group. But much more likely he was simply motivated by ambition. He saw the purpose of his life as treating



A detail from Carpeaux's "Ugolino et ses fils" taken from the book reviewed here.

great art – art that specifically would not blend into a façade, but would be likened to Clodion or Bernini. In this he succeeded, because these

whores, these dancers of the can-can, accused in their time of appearing drunken, lascivious, even plain sweaty, have alone among the

Waxworks of art

Malcolm Warner

GERALD M. ACKERMAN
The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme
With a catalogue raisonné
351pp. Sotheby. £57.50.
0856673110

Jean-Léon Gérôme is not the most engaging figure in nineteenth-century French art. He was the enemy of Impressionism, campaigning against the Manet memorial exhibition in 1883 and the Callebote Bequest in 1894. He looked like a Chief of Police and was proud of the fact: Courbet named his donkey after him. His paintings are so finished that they hardly seem to have been painted at all – less works of art than waxworks. He found it difficult to suggest movement or atmosphere or anything that was not reducible to line, and he made glaring errors of perspective, of lighting and of taste.

Yet, to the average art lover of the age, his work offered the irresistible effect of the remote made wonderfully present. Thanks to just enough historical and ethnographic homework, and a great deal of attention to costume, he could paint the death of Caesar, Christian martyrs about to be eaten by lions, Louis XIV taking breakfast with Molière, Napoleon contemplating the Sphinx, Arab warriors riding across the desert, or the forbidden interior of a mosque or harem with all the factual credibility of a photograph. It made him a very rich man. But, although his qualities as an artist are limited, they are by no means to be despised. Gerald Ackerman has reconstructed Gérôme's oeuvre with a passion for detail worthy of the man himself. Looking at the glossy plates and

being whisked from one century or one part of the world to another, from one adventure to another, only the most aesthetically prudish of readers could fail to be entertained. The text, by contrast, is a little on the dull side. Ackerman gives us not so much the life, as the career – and his discussion of the works seldom moves beyond mere fact and description. And splendid though the 180 colour plates may be (with only a few blurry exceptions), few are synchronized with the text; it does not help that there are no cross-references to them in the text, catalogue or index. There are, also, many mistakes that should have been picked up at the checking or proof-reading stages. For example, a pupil of Gérôme's is variously referred to as "Muenier", "Menuier" and "Meunier"; when Gérôme became a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour there was no doubt rejoicing in Heaven, but it is hard to believe that Jules Bastien-Lepage, who had been dead for sixteen years, could have sent him a letter of congratulation.

The contempt heaped upon Gérôme by the avant-garde and its supporters seems to have created an equal and opposite tendency to hero-worship among his admirers. Fanny Field Hering, whose early coffee-table book on him was published in New York in 1889, called him "the most eminent representative of high art of this nineteenth century" and wrote of his work as "unequaled; since the days of Leonardo da Vinci, in its marvellous comprehensiveness". Ackerman makes no such preposterous claims, but his writing is still uncomfortably eulogistic and defensive. He mentions contemporary critics' claims only to point out how wrong they were. He blames Gérôme's mistakes in perspective on the nearest studio assistant and makes all kinds of excuses for his attitude towards the Impressionists. Most of all, he fails to see that his subjects were

groups on the façade been transferred to Musée d'Orsay. There really is something lent going on in "La Danse"; there is no stability. The longer one looks the more is thrown off-balance by the rolling eyes, bold glances that alone hold the composition together. These Courbet-women with their thighs and Parisian faces could be found one night at the public bails: Carpeaux was the French sculptor of his generation to speak the vernacular, to talk in a language that had not been translated from the Latin – an artistic language, lacking decorum, that everyone could understand. "La Danse" was characteristic of its time and place, and this is what makes it so controversial.

Two exhibitions with catalogues supplement Anne Wagner's *Carpeaux*. The first is a classic *Metamorphoses in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture*, organized by Jeanne L. W. Winesman at the Fogg Art Museum in 1975, who dealt with the question of reproductive techniques in sculpture, and to which Wagner contributed the Carpeaux section. The second played to an empty house at the Grand Palais in Paris earlier this year: *La Sculpture française au XIXe siècle* (TLS, June 27). This did not show enjoyably covered very much the same ground as the first, more general half of Wagner's book, about the making of sculpture by sculptors in France – an introduction to a whole subject of the sculpture of the period that might have been planned to complement the publication of *Carpeaux*.

This review has inevitably simplified a complicated argument; nor does it do justice to the text in which page after page is filled with hot and fascinating material. Anne Wagner writes well with a sense of humour and some very good turns of phrase. The marbles in the Salko, for example, are described as "drawn up in rows, facing the light, rather like invalids 'sunning themselves'". She likes the amusing detail of the only inscriptions the prudent Garnier said not to have caused to be inscribed permanently on his Opéra were big bronze "N" for Napoleon III, which he had cast separately and fixed with "a single, easily detachable bolt". *Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second Empire* is a pleasure to read, and the book is beautifully designed and produced, with the notable exception of some extremely faded colour plates.

come, but he would have shown it to greater effect by engaging with matters of interpretation.

In her article "The Imaginary Orient", published in *Art in America* in 1983, Linda Nochlin relates the depiction of Islamic subject-matter in the work of Gérôme and other Orientalist painters to the ideology of imperialism. Ackerman lists this very persuasive piece among his "frequently cited sources", cites it in the bibliography section of a few catalogue entries, but omits even to mention it in his main text. Presumably he disagrees with Nochlin, but he should surely have said so and discussed the issue. Better still if he had come up with a reading of Gérôme to match hers in strength and seriousness.

Recently reprinted, *From the Classicism to the Impressionists: Art and architecture in the 19th century* (Volume III of *A Documentary History of Art*), selected and edited by Elizabeth Gilmore Holt (550pp, Yale. £40. 0300033801) was first published in 1966. Included in it is Antoine C. Quatremère de Quincy's "Commentary on an Antique Statue of Venus Found of the Island of Milos", 1820; excerpted from Viollet-le-Duc's *Tenth Discourse*, "The Architecture of the Nineteenth Century"; Baudelaire's commentary on the Salon of 1855; Zola's "Mon Salon" of 1866 in which he gives an account of how the jury reached its controversial decisions, reserving praise for Gérôme – "a very cunning and able jurist, he understood the deplorable thing that was going to happen and departed for Spain one day before the opening of the assizes to return ready-made for Holding a Private Exhibition"; May 1866 and Proudhon's "Of the Principle of Art and its Social Purpose", 1865.

A single-minded pursuit

Wilfrid Mellers

HANS KELLER
The Great Haydn Quartets: Their interpretation
260pp. Dent. £16.95.
0460046381

Anyone who was fortunate enough to sit in on, let alone participate in, one of Hans Keller's masterclasses for talented young string players (at the Menuhin School, Dartington, or the Guildhall), or one of his coaching sessions with a well-known, even internationally celebrated, quartet will think that he or she knows what to expect of this remarkable book. To a degree he or she will be disappointed: not because the book isn't good as well as remarkable, but because one recognizes, on reflection, that Keller's classes were themselves acts of performance. Understandably, he distrusted words about music, carrying his suspicion as far as to invent what he called "wordless analysis": which aimed to demonstrate, by way of selective musical quotation and permutation, the relationship of parts to the whole. This exercise was of course valuable, for few have musical intelligence acute enough fully to sense what is happening in a piece of music: to perceive where it is going, let alone why. Yet Keller himself never believed that wordless analysis sufficed; if he had, he would hardly have used so many penetratingly accurate words in his classes. Although, when teaching, he didn't often, at least directly, "interpret" music verbally, everything he said was concerned with the why as well as the how. His comments on shifting relationships between predictability and surprise – acceptance of and reaction to – against musically and socially accepted norms – were always implicitly evaluative. Though he thought one should try to "speak" in musical terms, he had no doubt that music was a language – the most probing one we have.

Talking, acting, walking, miming, playing, Keller made this manifest in class. But it can be trapped only intermittently, and fleetingly, on a printed page. Knowing this, Keller doesn't attempt the impossible. Instead, he offers a handbook for performing students. Trickily literal to hand, it may offer advice on tricky passages in his forty-five selected "great Haydn quartets": the trickiness being hardly ever in a specific technical problem, but rather in a musical problem of the relation of part to whole. For a mere listener, of course, the book makes hard going: the more depressingly so since Keller recurrently asserts that no one can "really" understand a quartet who hasn't played it. Even so, the mere listener, opening this book at random, may find instant illumination – though he needs to have the score of the quartet he lights on available. My (strictly) random sample is the account on page 166 of Haydn's multifunctional monothematicism in Op 64 No 5. Talk about the balance between first and second violin in a passage from the first movement broadens into the statement that

it isn't only the spicey, scherzoid, essentially instrumental character of the original theme that changes into its opposite, a lyrical, essentially song-like flow: another aspect of the theme, too, is replaced with its opposite and thus paradoxically aims at extreme relaxation at the high point of tension – the theme's relation to what was its polyrhythmic partner.

That's enough to indicate how Keller's analysis is at once critical and interpretative. On the opposite page (167) I randomly alight on a no less experientially revealing comment on the difference between two ostensibly similar upbeats in the minuet: As Keller knew, the very brightest students sense these things by the grace of God, or whatever one calls it. Scores of students, however, will be grateful throughout their playing lives for the revelation afforded by this (not very) mere man.

For readers, as distinct from reader-players, there are in this book as many typically Kellerian *aperçus* as one expects; they always enlighten, usually enlighten, occasionally enrage. Keller knew Haydn's quartets so well that one hesitates to question his findings. But did Haydn really "innovate" everything in the story of (what Keller regarded as) "grown-up" European music, and how much does it matter if he did? True, Haydn – in, for instance, the

polarity of C major and A major in the minuet and trio of Op 74 No 1 – explored the potential of mediant relationships no less profoundly than did Beethoven, with whom they are commonly associated. But isn't this polarity a physiological-acoustical fact which was in the air, and which many, even minor, composers lighted on without fully realizing its implications? It is odd to find so hyper-subtle an intelligence acting in a manner too simplistic. On the other hand, subtlety proves slightly obfuscating when Keller defines distinctions between Haydn's and Beethoven's wit (the "recognition of other modes of experience that may be possible") and Mozart's humour, for the distinctions become so fine as to be self-contradictory.

Similarly, Keller is intransigent in putting down the excesses of "authenticity". The difference between Haydn and Boccherini or Dittersdorf is

not only world-shaking, but we actually understand it better, hear it more clearly, than did the ears of Haydn's time. Mozart's apart. In this all-important sense our approach to his [Haydn's] style... is actually more direct, more knowing, quicker of hearing, than was his contemporaries'.

Fair enough: though how can Keller know that only Mozart heard Haydn as Keller did? Another passage aphoristically asserts that "a historically authentic style can murder the music of a great composer: it's the small composers that should be played authentically – or better still, not at all: they represent, rather than oppose, their age, which is why they die with it". Brilliant – yet on reflection is it true, or at least more than part of the truth? I can think offhand of a dozen "small" composers of whom authenticity has made sense, meaningful to us now: as it has, indeed, of a handful of great composers, most notably the now much-performed and recorded Marc-Antoine Charpentier.

Keller wouldn't, of course, have accepted Charpentier's greatness: which brings us to the limitations which Keller (not Charpentier) shares with commoner humanity. As is often the case, his limitations are inseparable from his strengths. He came here as a war-exile from his native Austria where he had had, in childhood and youth, a musical education of exceptional intensity. He frequently – after a while slightly tiresomely – tells us how he knew this or the other Haydn quartet "inside out" from the age of four or whenever. When he reached these shores, his playing knowledge of and intellectual insight into this music were unrivalled, and were to remain so. Given his upbringing, he was convinced that "evolutionary" sonata style, as practised pre-eminently by Haydn and Beethoven, was the highest point of European musical consciousness thus far. He may have been right; I go along with his typically dogmatic statement that "Beethoven was the greatest man who ever lived" – except that I would bracket Beethoven with Shakespeare, which Keller, in conversation, would not allow, I suspect because he regarded words as a less precise language than music. None the less, the "Faustian", Haydn-Beethoven notion of music, however centrally progressive, is not the only one; and in this context it is pertinent to note Keller's slightly equivocal attitude, in this book, to Mozart. No one who heard him talk about Mozart's quartets, quintets, piano concertos and operas could doubt that he was a great and committed Mozartian: so it is surprising to find here a passage hazy about that Mozart's quartets and quintets are "more popular" than any of Haydn's great Forty-five, and that "there is little doubt that Mozart's wealth of melodic invention has a wider appeal than Haydn's wealth of harmonic invention; don't even serious music lovers consider Mozart a greater composer than Haydn, a more inventive, more moving one?" That sounds like a mild reprimand: to which the simple answer is: Yes they do, and he is. This is not to belittle Haydn's supreme talents.

This playing down of Mozart's melodic genius, if that's what it is, bears on Keller's relative lack of interest in classical baroque music, even at the level of Bach, Handel, Couperin and Rameau, never mind the Teleman and Vivaldi. It would be unfair to say that he misunderstood this music since he didn't talk or write about it enough to provide a basis for discussion. One can say, however, that he was comfortably oblivious of Baroque

music; my efforts to communicate to him my enthusiasm for Byrd, Dowland, even the transcendent Monteverdi, were unavailing. Medieval music he regarded as totally irrelevant to modern man. On the whole he refused to look backwards; forwards he did look, mostly to composers who have roots in the "innovations" Haydn effected. Among his later heroes Mendelssohn, Franz Schmidt (a chamber-music player like Keller himself), and Schoenberg were palpable heirs to Viennese classical tradition. Shostakovich made the grade because he was a composer of symphonies, and still more of string quartets, "morphologically" Beethovenian in concept. He was also a composer of genius, for which Keller had a (nearly) unerring ear. I suspect that the unBeethovenian – even anti-Beethovenian – Britten entered the canon by a similar route. Few if any composers of our time can match the purity with which Britten's genius explored the "blind mazes of this tangled wood", wherein we are all, in our battered age, psychologically enmeshed. Britten transmutes an obsession with the outsider and scapegoat into a vision of a Boy who was, or might be, reborn: a motif which chimed with Keller's Jewish alienation. This bears too on Keller's superficially unexpected but expected profound appreciation of the music of George Gershwin – another innate genius whose parable of the (Negro-Jewish) outsider and scapegoat is currently enjoying a triumphant revival at Glyndebourne.

Keller's knowledge of (Viennese-orientated) psychology was, of course, scarcely less wide and deep than his knowledge of music, though he had no need of psychology to bolster his recognition of genius. His pantheon of heroes – Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schoenberg, Shostakovich, Britten and Gershwin – is too eclectic for us to accuse him of narrow-mindedness. I go along with all of them; but will never be able to swallow the

bracketing of Schoenberg with Haydn and Beethoven as "the only composers capable of playful complexity on the very highest level of inspiration". The genius of *Erwartung* shines through the darkly complex forest; Schoenberg's approaches to playfulness sound to my English ears elephantine. This is a cultural distinction, which is trivial. To me it does matter, however, that Keller, living willy-nilly in our global village and pluralistic society, wilfully shut out so much musical experience that I consider not only valid, but essential. Only his single-mindedness made his depth and intensity feasible; but there are reasons, not all of them discreditable, why string quartet playing can no longer be the synonym for the musical good life.

Retrospectively, I think of Hans as a devastating opponent at table tennis: at which, in Hollywood, Schoenberg and Gershwin are said to have battled (I often wonder who won). At our more modest level Keller and Mellers confronted one another, twenty or more years back, across summer-school tables; my English caution, usually worsted, found uncanny stimulation in defeat. The image of the small, glittering-eyed, flashing, dashing, slashing man hasn't faded with the years: nor will his literate memorial, though he left and could leave no book adequate to his creatively critical genius. In paying this posthumous tribute I recognize the word genius as appropriate, though of course Hans would have insisted that no critic could be a Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or Britten.

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Asking for direction

Richard Osborne

JONATHAN MILLER
Subsequent Performances
253pp. Faber. £15.
0571 131336

Lavishly illustrated and rather obviously "designed", *Subsequent Performances* is a coffee-table book for the thinking theatre-goer. The book's origins in lectures and seminars given by Jonathan Miller in the universities of Cambridge and Kent are evident in the text's random structure and in its loosely conversational style. Miller has always been a good talker, fertile, enthusiastic and ceaselessly – at times, waywardly – allusive; but it is a pity that his publishers have spent so little time preparing the text for the page. The repetition of ideas, individual words (at one point "raffish" takes over for several pages), and the all-pervasive "I" (fourteen on one page) might have been avoided. Miller, talking about Dickens to Hallam Tennyson in a carefully plotted and edited BBC Radio 3 conversation some years ago, made a more cogent impression than this book, which provides a good deal of powder and shot for the anti-Miller brigade who like to portray him as egocentric, discursive and intellectually arrogant. In fact, the reverse is the case. Far from being the smart alec intellect of middle-brow imagination, Miller is something of a good deal more valuable in today's public arena: a man much in love with theatre and opera, enthusiastic, responsive, intelligent and, at times, disarmingly naive.

The very diffuseness of the book is analogous to Miller's career, where stratagems for self-advancement have been persistently overruled by the whims and enthusiasms of his interests in medicine, theatre and opera. In this respect, the book lacks a coherent purpose and shape. Though endlessly autobiographical, it is not an autobiography; nor is it a polemic, though the pages on the subsidized theatre (once so enterprising, now "an occupation rather than a vocation"), on Tynan's "star-fucking excitement" as a writer on theatre, and Sir Peter Hall's "executive ambition" are among the most lively in the book. On theatre itself, Miller is neither as orderly as Peter Brook in his lecture-derived monograph *The Empty Space* nor as specific and consistently exploratory as John Barton in his *Playing Shakespeare* (reviewed in the *TLS* of October 12, 1984). Barton's book, it's worth recollecting, derives from a series of television programmes in which actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company were freshly engaged in interpreting a vast range of extracts from Shakespeare's plays. Miller, by contrast, has chosen to provide a retrospective on his own productions and production experiences. This is of considerable interest, though like the reminiscences of a gourmet recounting the pleasures of the great meals he has prepared or consumed, it can become wearisome. Miller also speculates a good deal about the nature of art, neglecting to note that what he touches on has been explored more extensively and written about more eloquently by philosophers from Aristotle to Langer, and writers too numerous to mention. The virtue of Miller's *Brave New World*, though, is that it is as new to him as it will undoubtedly be to many of his readers.

In the early part of the book, Miller reworks a number of old issues: the re-staging of the works of antiquity by the sculptors and painters of the Renaissance, the effect of context on a work of art (reviving memories of postgraduate seminars in the 1960s when we solemnly discussed whether or not a Brillo pad became a major work of art by virtue of being placed on the wall of the National Gallery), and the problems of scale which most forms of reproduction involve. Miller's principal concern, on which he spends a great deal of time, is the nature of a work's afterlife, though he fails to note that few major artists have claimed control over the interpretation of their works once they have reached the public domain. As to the inexhaustibility of great works of art, that point has been put, more briefly and more lyrically, by Shelley in his famous passage on Dante in *A Defence of Poetry*.

Another of Miller's central preoccupations

that the idea of resurrecting "authentic" performances is fundamentally flawed – is unquestionable though it merits restatement. A video of the first night of *Twelfth Night* would be of inestimable value to theatre historians but of limited use, Miller argues, to present-day theatre directors. In fact, Miller tends to simplify this issue, as did the late Hans Keller when he noted that though we have original instruments we don't have original ears. While that point is well made, some performing traditions are more valuable than Miller allows. I am sure that he is right to identify the limit of a director's freedom as the point at which a work's deep structure is dislocated (something avoided in Miller's skilful up-dating of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and in Brook's daring restoration of Bizet's *Carmen* to its own essential self). What Miller overlooks is the degree to which an older generation of interpreters understood this better than many moderns, something all too apparent in latter-day performances of much of the mainstream repertoire, orchestral, instrumental, and occasionally operatic, of music written between 1770 and 1914.

Miller is disarmingly honest about his lack of specialist musical skills. This does not appear to have hindered his work in the opera house, though it casts a shadow over most of his general utterances about music in these lectures. To assert that abstract music can describe (Miller cites the Storm in Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*) but not assert and deny is palpably false. If the C sharp in bar seven of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony is not a rebuttal of E flat major (albeit an equivocal one as later developments reveal), I don't know what it is. Despite the best efforts of musicologists to confine analysis of music to structure and nothing but structure, it is not entirely unreasonable to extrapolate communicable meanings from a musical text. Miller's view of conductors as dowdy conservative technicians is odd coming from a man some of whose best work was done in the 1970s with Kent Opera's Roger



Robert Lowell, Jonathan Miller and members of the cast of Lowell's version of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound Yale 1967. The photograph is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

Norrington, scholarly, innovative and intellectually astute. It is also difficult to take seriously Miller's implication that playing the role of Claudius is intrinsically more demanding than playing Haydn's Cello Concerto. Putting aside the fact that you will find half-a-dozen plausible Claudiiuses on any Clapham omnibus but very few people who can play the cello, there is the more serious fact that Miller ignores the consistent identification with the spirit and style of a piece of music which any successful interpreter is required to achieve. It is precisely this quality of imaginative identification with a rudimentary printed text which links actor and musician and which enables us to distinguish crucially between the latest media prodigy and a Tortelier or a Casals.

By far the most searching, and bravest, part of Miller's extemporisations comes in the section of the lectures devoted to the translation of a work into a different medium. Miller is uneasy about the appearance on television of plays written for a medium in which the audience "were expected to breathe the same air as

the performers"; he dislikes the exclusiveness of the individual camera angle, and he deplores a film's continual tendency to look for scenic realism. (He remains baffled by the underachievement of his own TV *Othello*.) His praise for Trevor Nunn's televised *Macbeth*, where "the characters loomed in and out of a non-constant blackness", is warm, and apt to his case. His detailed exposition of why a novel cannot reasonably be translated to the screen is limited and should be ready by anyone tempted to direct schoolchildren or undergraduates in films like Polanski's *Tess* or Ken Russell's *Women in Love*. This final section of the lectures, though short, merits reprinting as a monograph in its own right.

The opening lecture apart, this is a stimulating and diverting book. Those envious of Miller's success will find plenty to carp at (not to nothing are Miller's remarks on Iago and the politics of envy particularly shrewd) but it is curmudgeonly spirit which does not place a high value on what Miller so variously aims at and so persistently achieves.

Opposites unresolved

Julian Symons

MARK KRUPNICK
Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism
207pp. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. \$21.95 (paperback, \$10.95).
08101 07120

The liberal imagination, what is that? Well, it is the title of a collection of critical essays which, when published in book form in 1951, sold a hundred thousand copies in paperback, and established Lionel Trilling as the most influential critic of his generation. But what is a liberal imagination, what distinguishes it from a socialist or a conservative imagination? Trilling would have deprecated such a question. His essays, he said, had the unity of "an abiding interest in the ideas of what we loosely call liberalism", and he could say with assurance that this liberalism had been the prevailing intellectual tradition for a decade or more, but it was unwise to go further. Liberalism was "a large tendency rather than a concise body of doctrine", and "attempts to define liberalism are not likely to meet with success". How was it possible, then, for him to refer confidently to "our liberal ideology" and what it had produced? An ideology is a systematic scheme of ideas, and surely cannot exist without some definition of its nature.

The question is not merely captious, and should not be unanswerable, although in terms of literary politics liberalism means different things on the two sides of the Atlantic. The primary difference is that a British liberal writer's concern with social matters is likely to stop short of directly political involvement, whereas many American liberals – particularly intellectuals of Trilling's generation – looked to play a part in changing society through their own writing and political activity. Several of the liberals connected with *Partisan Review*

would in Britain have been called radicals or socialists. Did such American liberalism have an ideology? That seems doubtful, but to assume the ideology's existence and leave it undefined reveals the deliberate imprecision, both of language and meaning, at the heart of Trilling's critical writing. Mark Krupnick's excellent study of Trilling's career and opinions notes the conflict in his life that involved the need for such imprecision. Looking back on his years at college, Trilling saw them as "an effort to discover some social entity to which I could give the credence of my senses, as it were, and with which I could be in some relation". We are in no doubt that the writer was searching for something, but what? The meaning of the phrases slips away, leaving one unsure about what is meant by a "social entity", even by being "in some relation" to it. Is Trilling saying that he has been looking for a view of society to which he could give intellectual assent? Does "in some relation" mean something like joining the Communist Party?

No doubt the vague phrasing reflects the writer's own uncertainty, and Professor Krupnick sees Trilling's career as a series of choices he refused to make: in youth between "positive Jewishness" and the dream of supreme gentleness nursed by his mother in which her son would gain a PhD at Oxford; in the 1930s between what Krupnick neatly divides as the downtown New York world of radical politics represented by *Partisan Review* and the up-town world of Columbia where Trilling was the first Jew to teach in the English Department. In the 1940s he became what Krupnick calls "the liberal critic of liberalism", and in the 1960s strongly deprecated the anti-intellectual irrationalism that was the mode of the time. Yet, except perhaps in the 1960s, Trilling was rarely in outright opposition to the trend or movement he was criticizing, but remained attached to it. It was an attitude in some ways similar to that of Orwell within the British socialist movement during the 1930s and 40s, with the important difference that Orwell spelt

out his differences from socialist orthodoxy with crude directness, while Trilling did his best simultaneously to assert and conceal his differences from what he was attacking. There are times when one feels he would regard the voicing of an unequivocal opinion as an unequivocal error.

This applies particularly when he is dealing with issues where literary values conflict with radical politics. *The Liberal Imagination* contains some of his most perceptive criticism – the early, generous appreciation of Scott Fitzgerald, the essay showing the unscientific approach of the assumedly impersonal Kinsey Report and stressing its strong permissive effects – but it shows also his reluctance to commit himself. "The Function of the Little Magazine", written in 1946 as the introduction to a selection of pieces from *Partisan Review*, with which Trilling had been and remained closely associated, says little about the subject suggested in the title, but approaches with crabwise caution the awkward fact that the finest creative writers in the period were not "progressive". Proust, Eliot, Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence, Kafka and others, none of them loved "the ideas and emotions which liberal democracy... has declared respectable". (He could have gone further in the cases of Lawrence, Eliot and Yeats.)

On the other hand "our liberal ideology" had not produced for several decades a writer who commanded "our real literary admiration", although the writers' liberal objectives might be approved. Very typically Trilling named none of these writers whose work he said had "neither imagination nor mind", and one cannot know who he meant. Obviously not Forster, about whom Trilling had written at length and admiringly. Perhaps he was thinking only of American writers, but who were they? Probably Dreiser, perhaps Sinclair Lewis, but what about contemporaries? Did he have Dos Passos, Steinbeck, Hemingway, Faulkner in mind? The critic did not stay for an answer, nor did he go on to consider whether,

if "reactionary" writers have produced work more memorable than that of "progressives" over a period of decades, that should lead us to question the nature of artistic creation and the soil that nurtures it. Such dangerous matters are disregarded in favour of the safe statement that "the writer serves his daemon and his subject", and advice to *Partisan Review*'s 6,000 readers to be neither frightened nor charmed by the idea of coterie writing. Polonious would have approved.

The tendency first to denigrate the quality of a cake and then to eat it with evident enjoyment is apparent in an essay of 1943 about Kipling, who had recently been certified intellectually respectable by Eliot's introduction to the poems and Edmund Wilson's psycho-sociological examination of the life. "Our rejection of Kipling (here as often Trilling joins himself to other unnamed liberals) was 'our first literary-political decision', but was it right? We watch Trilling arguing it out through a dozen pages. As a boy he had loved the *Jungle Book* and *Barrack Room Ballads* – but then Kipling never advanced beyond this stage of appeal to boys, and eventually became silly and a bore. He loved Indian ways of life and behaviour as few Europeans did in Victorian days – yet Indians said he represented them falsely. As a poet he would 'scarcely rank very high', yet 'much must be said in his praise'. His hatred of liberal intellectualism was such that he wrote about it with a vicious contempt that was bound to bring a similar response – but 'make no mistake about it – Kipling was an honest man and he loved the national virtues'. So should we enjoy the Kipling cake or send it back as inedible? I hard to say, because we end the essay unsure whether the critic thinks Kipling a great writer, or even a good one. Such balancing became for Trilling a way of criticism. Krupnick puts it gently when he says he "preferred the continued existence of oppositions to any program for resolving them", which seems another way of saying that he enjoyed the privilege of never making up his mind.

Between theatre and museum

Colin Mackerras

TAO-CHING HSÜ
The Chinese Conception of the Theatre
685pp. University of Washington Press. \$35.
0295 960345

In the past few decades an extensive literature has appeared on both Chinese and comparative theatre. However, we have not had many major studies comparing Chinese with European theatre, and it is the main strength of this very large book that it helps to fill this gap. *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre* has five sections. The first four deal with all aspects of traditional Chinese performing arts, artistic, social, historical and so on, of all periods, from the earliest times to the first half of the twentieth century. The last section, which by itself occupies nearly half the book, compares Chinese theatre with that of Ancient Greece and of Elizabethan England, as well as the *commedia dell'arte* and other European theatres. Tao-Ching Hsü's main conclusion is that "most if not all of the characteristics of the Chinese theatre can be found in the European theatre; and vice versa". He goes on to suggest that the origins of theatre and drama may be found in two aspects of human nature, "the mimetic instinct and the exhibitionist trait".

The strong parallels which he emphasizes between the theatres of Europe and China make interesting reading, and his appeals to similarities in social and theatrical conventions, as well as in audiences, performance sites and even content, are convincing. But Hsü underestimates the significance of the enormous differences in style. He himself draws attention to many contrasts, which tend to dwindle in importance, however, when he reaches his conclusion. His appeal to the attributes of "human nature" is also unconvincing, for it overlooks the fact that many cultures did not develop drama traditions independently, even though the people without dances or music is rare indeed. An explanation which depends on "human" features should be applicable to

all cultures, not merely those of China and Europe. Hsü's treatment of the origins and development of Chinese theatre takes very good account of the various strands which he considers constitute a fully developed drama, and he also gives convincing definitions of the differences between "theatre" and "drama". Moreover, he includes beautifully drawn, clear charts, one of which indicates the "elements" of drama, another which shows the dates when the various types of performing arts arose in China and their confluence in the formation of drama there.

Hsü makes the point about Chinese theatre in general that it is non-ideological, non-religious and "hedonistic", and he criticizes those foreigners who "mistake the moral precepts which govern Chinese life, especially those connected with the sanctity of the family", as "social propaganda". It is true that the content of most Chinese drama is secular, but it is mostly shot through with Confucian values and in this sense carries a thorough, if indirect, Confucian message. Hsü's comment that "the sentiments expressed in the dramas in relation to the family are... natural feelings" to the Chinese suggests that to be acceptable to the audience a drama should have no ideological content, but this is surely somewhat misleading. The great majority of rural and many urban stages were once attached to temples and the occasion for drama in China was often religious.

Although the author's knowledge of many different forms of Chinese and European theatre is impressive, even admirable, the book has a number of weaknesses. For one thing, it is far too long for what it achieves. The sections on Chinese theatre bristle with unnecessarily long quotations and the author's style is wordy and heavy. The structure is far from ideal and the scope so broad that the book also loses focus. The relation of the chapters on Chinese theatre to the long comparative section is vague, so that it tends to read like two separate works.

The author tells us in his preface that he completed the book in 1955 and revised it in 1979, the changes "consisting mostly of the

correction of errors and the addition of new references". Yet the overwhelming majority of his sources are from the early 1950s and before. For the Chinese section, he has totally ignored what has been written about theatre since that not only in the West, Japan and the Soviet Union, but also in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. This is not to suggest that the older sources are bad, but scholarship becomes dated at the best of times and three decades between completion and publication is too long. An example may illustrate the dangers: Hsü argues that "the Chinese theatre had suffered little official censorship"; yet in 1958 Wang Xiaochuan published a volume of numerous edicts, dating from the thirteenth to the early twentieth centuries, censoring or banning certain theatrical types and items.

Not all Hsü's use of terminology is apt. He uses the term "mask", for instance, to refer to the painted face of the Chinese actor, but "mask" is quite separate from the human face, and as a device is not standard in Chinese drama, where an extensive tradition has arisen of painting the face of certain characters in order to emphasize his personality as well as for dramatic effect.

The author has decided to ignore developments in China since 1940, a wise decision perhaps, considering the vast scope of the book even as it stands. However, he does make a few comments depicting the sad state of traditional theatre in Taiwan and its destruction in the People's Republic during the Cultural Revolution. Despite the more recent change of policy, he can still write that his book, written as a paean and a celebration has turned almost into an obituary. But the reality is that traditional Chinese theatre is currently performed extremely widely in the People's Republic, with a style closer to the classical one than at any other time since 1949. While I cannot endorse his comment that "there is no discernible audience to replace" the old companies, the evidence seems to point decisively against any early demise of the traditional theatre, though within a few decades it will possibly become more a museum piece than a popular form of drama.

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A man with views as decided as Kipling's made Trilling uncomfortable, and he was similarly uneasy when dealing with Orwell, in the course of writing an introduction to *Homage to Catalonia* in the 1950s. The truth of Krupnick's view that Trilling tried to expunge his own radical commitments of the 1930s but was for a long while haunted by them, is shown here in the wistful appreciation of Orwell as a man who had come through fire with his idealism unscathed. "We" – that ambiguous "we" invoked so often by Trilling in relation to his friends in the 1930s and 40s – had tried to believe that politics might be an idyll, and so had become unwillingly involved in "an ultimate immorality" in the form of a dishonesty about social questions which affected "our" personal lives. Orwell had somehow, mysteriously, managed to avoid this, had emerged from the deceptions and immoralities so flagrant in Spain with his political impulse unweakened. Orwell, as one of Trilling's students said to him, was a virtuous man – but who is entirely happy in the presence of a virtuous man? Not Lionel Trilling. No sooner had he awarded Orwell the laurels of virtue than he carried out a reductive exercise in relation to the good man's literary achievement, telling us that Orwell was not a genius, not a particularly good novelist, that *Animal Farm* had been overrated and his essays were interesting chiefly because they came from the pen of a Plain Man. It is as though he cannot bear to acknowledge that a man of the period who had been politically right could possess any subtlety of mind, or have anything more than a plain man's gifts as a writer.

This insistence on setting up opposed views about almost any literary question reflected ambivalences of what must have been an agonizing kind in Trilling's own beliefs. It would be wrong not to acknowledge that "the opposing self" (a title given to a collection of essays written in the 1950s) often gave his criticism subtlety and originality. A brilliant piece about *Mansfield Park* begins by stating the received view that this is the least interesting and least ironic of Jane Austen's novels, and Fanny Price her least agreeable heroine. Then this view is successfully upended to show us that what seem the delightful speeches of Mary Crawford are marked by insincerity and that other ironies of an inverted kind play through the book, related to concepts like sincerity and vulgarity which Jane Austen was among the first to realize in fiction. Nobody could read the essay without feeling the need to look again at the novel from the Trilling viewpoint.

Acknowledge the subtleties, though, and there can still be no doubt that the setting up of unresolved oppositions is damaging to Trilling as a critic. Rigidity of the critical mind, like that of Yvor Winters, is obviously limiting, but Trilling's "essential agreement with the tendency that in some respects he lamented" (Krupnick's phrase) leads to the verbal confusions already suggested, and through them to the avoidance of a point of view. Perhaps Trilling realized this. In the two decades before his death in 1975 he turned away from concern with the state of society to investigation of the self, in quest as he had been since youth of that "social entity... with which I could be in some relation". Yet the self too is a concept that in his writing remained undefined, so that it could mean different things at different times. In the lecture "Freud and the Crisis of our Culture" (1955) he said outright that literature was dedicated to the conception of the self. The self was important, the culture in which it existed only of secondary interest as "a chief object of the self's energies". One of the attractions this view held for Trilling was that it finally disposed of the ideas of those Marxist theorists with whom he had been closely connected in the 1930s, who believed that almost the contrary was true. Now Trilling contrasted the frequent nobility of the conception of the self in literature with the pathetic or vicious failure of joint or many selves when they became "society" in action. Yet in his hands Freud's ideas led once more to the construction of oppositions, this time between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, which led to distinctions between what Trilling called man-in-culture and man-in-community. These led in turn to specifically literary oppositions, particularly the one upon which he focused attention

tion in his last decade, the quarrel between the great modernists and their culture.

In the preface to *The Opposing Self* he had written that the modern self, by which he meant primarily modern writers, had an "intense and adverse imagination of the culture in which it has its being". (It is curious verbal haziness that says "intense and adverse imagination of" rather than "opposed to".) This was a question he had adumbrated already in touching on the undemocratic beliefs of some great modernists. Now, in "On The Teaching of Modern Literature" (1961), he approached again the question of the modernist revolt against the emotionally destructive nature of civilization, dealing not with twentieth-century writers but with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Conrad and Nietzsche. He no longer questioned the politics of these socially reactionary yet emotionally radical figures, but dealt with their concern to obtain "not merely freedom from the middle class but freedom from society itself". If the phrase seems to sound an approving note about such "freedom", that was purely theoretical. In the 1960s Trilling was disturbed by his students' easy adaptation to subversive ideas in literature, and even more distressed by their readiness to carry through the implications of such ideas into action. Krupnick quotes from a newspaper interview in 1969, at the height of the student troubles, when with no obvious sense of irony or incongruity Trilling expressed his dismay that students regarded ideas about violence voiced by Yeats, Lawrence and Gide as pieces of practical advice. "No one ever thought that when these writers represented violence as interesting or beneficent they were really urging their readers on to bloody actions."

The portrait of Lionel Trilling that emerges from his major criticism is of a sensitive and perceptive, but also uneasy and uncertain man, very different from the assured, humorous and tolerant figure whose photograph is on the wrapper of Krupnick's book. That this easy Trilling existed is attested to by some of his lesser critical pieces, in particular the fifty-two brief commentaries he wrote for the anthology *The Experience of Literature*. This was a textbook collection of plays, short stories and poems, made for student use, and the brevity of the introductions made it almost impossible for Trilling to indulge in his customary ambivalences. What he has to say about short stories by twenty writers including James and Joyce, plays that range from *King Lear* to Brecht's *Galileo*, poems by Pope, Yeats, Auden, Eliot and others is fresh, straightforwardly informative, uncluttered by theory. Obviously these introductions, like the chatty pieces done for the Readers' Subscription Book Club and brought together as *A Gathering of Fugitives*, are minor criticism, but they show a relaxed, unbuttoned man quite different from the one responsible for work written with more seriousness and urgency.

One of the introductions in *An Experience of Literature* is to Trilling's own story, "Of This Time, Of That Place", and it reminds us that if the criticism often gives the impression of a man shadow-boxing himself in public to a series of draws, similar conflicts in his novel *The Middle of a Journey* and two of his very few short stories give them wonderful richness and complexity. Here one parts company from Krupnick, who calls the masterly "Of This Time" complacently solemn, comments on the author's "moralizing gloss", and seems to think that the core of the story is the academic rise of the teacher who feels compelled to reveal the mental derangement of his student Tertan. But the teacher's awareness that something genuinely creative in Tertan has been betrayed by his revelation is the "meaning" of a story that, as the introduction tells us, was based on Trilling's own similar experience with a student, and his feeling after communicating the boy's derangement to the Dean that "against all reason... I had committed a great disloyalty". Behind the talented but deranged Tertan stands the power of the irrational, and the desire to obtain "freedom from society itself" that fascinated and alarmed Trilling. The subtleties of the tale, its balancing of reason and doubt, creativeness and madness, are powerfully moving because they are a kind of personal revelation. "The Other Margaret", which looks at the problems of class and colour, power and passionate destructiveness, is

almost as good. Another aspect of it concerns the limitations of liberalism, and this story of the 1940s, where it deals with the "other Margaret" – a causeless violence, is almost a forecast of the meaningless (in rational terms) student violence of the 1960s which dismayed Trilling so deeply that his reaction to it, as he said, was a despairing shrug. But of course the two stories stand as magnificent imaginative inventions, independent of these inevitable references to reality.

They take much of their power and poignancy from the author's emotional attachment to the radicalism he had intellectually abandoned, and in *The Middle of a Journey* he makes art from his own ambiguities. Again the relationship to the political realities of the period must be mentioned, even though the fact that the character of Gifford Maxim was based on Whittaker Chambers is incidental to the book's quality – and indeed, as Trilling said in his introduction to the new edition published in the year of his death, stayed almost unremarked until the Hiss affair. What gives the book its flavour is the view of "the mentality of the Thirties and Forties", something which Trilling said must strain comprehension for readers in the 1970s, but which he perfectly understood and made plausible. He was not a natural novelist, in the sense that his interests lay in ideas rather than in characterization or dialogue, but he realized that a Jamesian vagueness over factual matters was crucial to the success of this political novel.

Krupnick's objection that we know nothing about the political background of Arthur and Nancy Croom, are not told "what Communist Party front groups they have worked in", and so on, is surely misplaced. The Crooms are archetypal fellow-travellers, progressive Nancy saying of the Moscow Trials (a remark perfectly typical of the person and the time) that "even if those men were subjectively honest they may have had to be executed". The reaction of the Crooms, and of the fence-sitting John Laskell, to the arrival of Gifford Maxim, respected underground Party activist who has broken with revolutionary politics and tells his unbelieving hosts that he fears assassination, is handled with perfect tact. It would have been easy to caricature the Crooms, but the novel gains in dignity from the fact that they are allowed to exist on their own terms, their viewpoint treated seriously. It is the changing relationships of the Crooms, Laskell and Maxim (who had no place in the first draft of what would have been a much less ambitious novel) that makes the book seem to be telling human truths rather than stressing political points. It is one of the three great political novels based on the lives and beliefs of the 1930s, along with *Darkness at Noon* and Wyndham Lewis's *The Revenge for Love*. Like Koestler and Lewis, Trilling challenged what was still in the 1940s a left-wing orthodoxy, and the novel's publication was an act of considerable courage. Trilling did not go verbally unscathed, nor perhaps emotionally uninjured. The reaction of the fellow-traveller Matthew Josephson was representative of others: "Lionel Trilling, critic turned novelist, seems disgusting." In America the novel is still regarded as minor fiction: in Britain, as Trilling himself recorded, its reception was much warmer.

As we look at the body of Trilling's criticism a decade after his death, its insights do seem vitiated by a desire to avoid coming down to specific cases by taking refuge in those "unresolved dualisms" for which Mark Krupnick has so keen an eye. Edmund Wilson also moved through a crisis of radical belief and disillusionment, but although his criticism shifted direction it lost nothing in power and certainty. Trilling, however, never quite believed and was never quite disillusioned. He hankered throughout his life for certainties which he distrusted increasingly as he approached them more nearly, so that even his final ideal of the "shaped self", the wholly rational man, proved inadequate. Only when wearing the mask of the fiction writer was he able freely and confidently to approach the contradictions inherent in his own personality. Among the eleven volumes of his collected works two are enough for the fiction: "One wishes there were more, but his single novel and the finest of the short stories are the assurance of a major talent."

The last act

Gavin Cologne-Brookes

ALVIN BEDIANT
In the Heart's Last Kingdom: Robert Penn Warren's major poetry
250pp. Harvard University Press. £18.50
0674 445465

Robert Penn Warren's varied career, as Calvin Bediant in *In the Heart's Last Kingdom* is symptomatic of his poetic sensibility, "yearning" to discover "knowledge" and "vision". It reflects his development towards poetic maturity gained only in latter years, signalled by the appearance of *Audubon* in 1969.

Certainly Warren has had an extraordinary career. Few writers move so successfully between fiction, poetry, criticism and teaching. He first gained a reputation as one of Nashville's "Fugitive group" in the 1920s, years, he told the *Paris Review* in 1971, didn't have much interest in fiction... reading my head off in poetry. "Nevertheless," he "quit writing poems", turned to fiction, and won a Pulitzer Prize for *All the King's Men* (1946). His return to poetry brought a second Pulitzer, for *Promises* (1957). Finally, more, Warren's collaboration with Chicago produced textbooks that revolutionized literary study in education.

But Professor Bediant begins: "Nothing Robert Penn Warren's long career as a man of letters had so distinguished it as his last act." (That distinction was acknowledged last year when Penn Warren was made the first American "Poet Laureate.") Bediant marked the beginning of his "greatness as a writer", announced "a repudiation of the country of uncertain poetic purpose", revealed "an assured voice" and "a personal and passionate knowledge of values". That Warren's later poetry marks a growth in stature is hardly disputed, though admirers of his novels may disagree with Bediant's subsequent claim that novel-writing was merely a "no impulse" that led Warren astray.

Bediant's book shows he shares Warren's belief in criticism's creative potential, quoting the precept "you have to redo the work, going inside it". Like Warren's career, developed early and late by poetry, in *In the Heart's Last Kingdom* has a circular structure, beginning and ending with a focus on the later poetry. The book's title gives overall unity to captures the essence of the thesis. In his poem "The Turpitudes of Time: N.D.", Warren wrote, "in the heart's last kingdom / Only the old are young".

Poetic rejuvenation in old age is a theme regained, Bediant argues, by the discovery that "the heart has its 'place' after all".

Its happiness is one with its fate, its song of isolation. In its "last" kingdom, the heart finds its willing to settle for nothing less than this childlike. Besides, its former kingdoms having passed together with history into delusion, it must be a kingdom, or none.

In *Audubon* Warren finally confronted his own crisis, so that "his earlier relation to them" described by Bediant as "like viewing a distant river", Warren was now "in the river". A structure, so with imagery, Bediant immersed himself in the flow of Warren's poetry, "Truth" and "Glory", for example, he wrote that "Warren struggles to erect them like a tower in a cosmic waste". Also characteristic here is Bediant's use of numerous breaks within the main chapters, quote, for instance, Nabokov or Woolf on criticism, or to list the "too much" (long titles) Warren. "At his best, Warren improves his technique (it is chosen by the situation)" he aims here, to emulate Warren's approach, clear from a comparison with the quite different styles of Bediant's previous books. In times, his style in *In the Heart's Last Kingdom* threatens to collapse into a quagmire of dashes, lists and parentheses. Bediant's inclusive anatomies of selected poems, and "Rattlesnake Country" and "Heart of the turn", and uses other poems and prose to reveal the flashes of later maturity. His "critical" criticism captures the feel of Robert Penn Warren's poetry, just as his explication of "the passion" is thus revealed, as much as the "knowledge".

Learning from England

Peter Gay

ROSEMARY ASHTON
Little Germany: Exile and asylum in Victorian England
304pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0192122398

Germany has made many exiles in her time, and Britain has given asylum to many of them – not enough – in hers. The best-known of these have been, of course, refugees from Hitler in the 1930s. Now, in this unpretentious and sensible study, Rosemary Ashton, who has already made her mark in Anglo-German history with her study of the impact of German thought on four nineteenth-century English writers, has chosen to tell the story of German immigrants, many of them political refugees, who came to England in the 1840s.

The centrepiece of her crowded canvas is, almost inevitably, Karl Marx. He appears pretty much as one remembers him from the biographies: impecunious, intelligent, sarcastic, unsparing of opponents, exploitative with friends, a very bourgeois social snob. Ashton quotes Heine as supposedly saying of him, "When all is said and done, a man is very little if he is nothing but a razor." But he was also rather domestic: finding proper schools and piano teachers for his daughters, going on Sunday picnics with his family on Hampstead Heath, "equipped with a picnic basket containing roast veal, tea, sugar, and fruit", and "buying bread, cheese, milk, shrimps, watercress, beers and winkles from stalls on the way and on the Heath itself". There was "singing and story-telling, gymnastics on the grass, hunting for wild flowers, races, and donkey rides". But little of Marx's life was idyllic. He was, as we know, largely dependent on Friedrich Engels for his livelihood; his sizeable journalistic output was never enough to secure financial independence. Only once, Ashton recalls, did Marx propose to find employment, in a railway office, "but he was turned down for the job of clerk because of his illegible handwriting" – no wonder, as anyone who has ever tried to read that handwriting can attest.

Writing *Capital* and commenting on the political scene for whatever newspaper would print him took most of Marx's time. But he also engaged, with the kind of sarcastic gusto typical of him, in émigré politics, even more embittered and more pathetic than it was in the 1930s. The German exiles, whether '48ers or others, had as much to divide as to unite them, and with his quick and unsparing pen, Marx hardly acted as a peacemaker. His fellow-Communists were, to his mind, idlers and milk-sops, lacking stamina and energy, and only too inclined to show themselves the petty bourgeois they really were. No German government spy could have written a more savage caricature of them than Marx himself, in his amusing and ungenerous attack, "The Great Men of the Exile", of 1852. He might have recognized, being an exile himself, how severely exile tests greatness.

Fortunately, Ashton does not stay with Marx at the expense of the others. Engels, genial, observant, with expensive tastes and infinite patience with Marx, occupies some of her most interesting pages. So does Wilhelm Pieper, "the Lothario of the German exile", a real discovery. Briefly Marx's secretary and translator, he made his living as a tutor, for the most part to the Rothschild family, with whom he travelled on the Continent. But he was dismissed after a fight with Baroness Rothschild, with whom he had been having an affair. "The silly lad", Marx characteristically said of him, "mistakes his lack of principles for genial high spirits." An inveterate ladies' man, he cynically tried for advantageous marriages and more than once landed in hospital with syphilis. He was luckier than many of his fellow-exiles: by the 1860s, he was back in Germany, doing well as a schoolteacher. When Marx ran into him in 1867, he found him "a bloated philistine".

Few of his fellow-exiles had the good fortune to become bloated with prosperity, or back in philistinism. Ashton's most moving chapter is one she devotes to what she calls "the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat" among the exiles: misfits, beggars, psychotics, consumptives, working men injured in sweat-shops. Another chapter, less pathetic but no less interesting, parades the women of the exile who made their living as writers and governesses. Two of them, Johanna Kinkel and Malwida von Meysenbug, fill out the space Ashton gives them and virtually plead for more. Kinkel, "the mother of the emigrants", as she called herself, was the wife of the eminent art historian Gottfried Kinkel, who became embroiled in the German revolutions of 1848 and 1849, was imprisoned, escaped and came to England. Handsome, egotistical and brilliant, he was irresistible to women, an asset he exploited, much to his wife's dismay. Johanna Kinkel taught music, worked on a history of music, and wrote a fascinating *roman-à-clef*, *Hans Ibeles in London*, that might just repay

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A detail from Tissot's "Waiting for the Ferry at the Falcon Tavern", circa 1874; it is reproduced from Tissot by Christopher Wood (160pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £20. 0.297 789.30.9).

reviving. She committed suicide in 1858. Her friend Malwida von Meysenbug, unlike most of the other refugee women unmarried, an intellectual with revolutionary views, made her living in England as a governess. She was fortunate in her employers. The governess problem had become conspicuous enough to occupy the pages of the weeklies: Charlotte Brontë's famous characterization in *Jane Eyre* only dramatized what thousands of young women experienced more resignedly. But von Meysenbug, aristocratic but penniless, fell in with Herzen, who came to London in 1852 and needed a governess for his two daughters. He was interested in her ideas, and she had time to

The public's appetite for this sort of literature was insatiable and its sense of discrimination limited. For the German exiles in England, this situation offered splendid possibilities of self-expression and desired cash. England was a great teacher: however appalling an Engels might find English religious hypocrisy, the close supervision and crippling censorship of the German states was far worse. "One can learn an awful lot in England", Johanna Kinkel wrote in 1854, and she urged her fellow-exiles, "instead of always chewing over their old mottoes and maxims", to "make a thorough study of this land and its institutions". One thing one could learn in England, she sensibly pointed out, was that the "religious narrowness of the English" was far preferable to the "constant torments in Germany on account of our unbelief". For some of the Germans in England the country was a laboratory, showing high capitalism at work: Engels's *Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 is a good instance of how shrewd observation and predetermined theory can produce the kind of flawed classic characteristic of an exile's perception, a curious amalgam of insight and myopia.

Ashton concludes her book a little lamely: "The German exiles and their children experienced British life in the nineteenth century and commented valuably on the land of fogs and freedom, of fairness and formality, of progress and tradition." Actually, her own enjoyable text shows that their comments add up to a rather more complex picture: the commentators she quotes ran the gamut from ill-tempered, lonely refugees longing to return to the homeland that had driven them out, to appreciative, fair-minded, penetrating strollers through their new environment. The great French historian of England, Elie Halévy, pointed out in the preface to his *England in 1815* that there is a kind of Heisenberg law of imperfect objectivity: what the foreigner must lose as he overlooks local detail oblivious to the native, he may gain through the distance and disinterestedness which may sharpen his vision. In our time, when subjectivity is in the saddle and objectivity decried as a fantasy, or an ideology, this is an issue deserving more exploration than it has received, and the foreign observer is as useful a test case as I can think of. It is one of the merits of Rosemary Ashton's *Little Germany* that it stimulates one to such questions.

From the workshop

John Burnett

G. E. MINGAY
The Transformation of Britain 1830-1939
233pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £18.95.
07100 9762 X

What is the justification, it has to be asked, for "yet another" economic and social history of Britain in the modern period? Since Arnold Toynbee established the subject as a respectable field for scholarly enquiry a century ago much has changed: new methods, sources, theories and perspectives have widened and humanized a formerly narrow study into something very like total history. According to the general editor of the series of which G. E. Mingay's book forms the final volume, "the intention... is to see the history of Britain partly in human terms – of changing cultural, social, political and economic patterns – but more specifically in terms of what that society produced, and what remains of it today". That is a laudable objective, but can it be achieved within the allotted space? Can 230 pages covering a hundred crowded years of momentous economic and social changes take proper account of recent research and offer fresh interpretations, or is an author forced to retreat into pot-boiled summaries and tired generalizations?

The Transformation of Britain which Professor Mingay chronicles – from a rise to domination of the international economy to a brief plateau of sustained success and then into a downward slope of relative decline – is in outline well known and not in dispute. In 1833, somewhere near the turning-point of its hegemony

mony, Britain had a 37 per cent share of world trade in manufactures, in 1913 25 per cent and in 1937 19 per cent; already in 1913 it had fallen to third place (after the United States and Germany) in terms of total industrial production, and was no longer the "workshop of the world". That must surely be a central theme of this book, and merits more than a rapid review of possible causes in the last three pages, controversial though the explanations may be.

What, in fact, one misses in this book is a sense of the excitement of historiography, a whiff of the debates and arguments, sometimes passionate and occasionally personal, which have surrounded many of the issues on which the author touches. Should we not be reminded of the "standard-of-living debate", for example, of the "Hungry Forties" and – for that matter – the hungry 1930s? What do modern demographers have to say about the causes of the population explosion? How did industrialization shape the class structure and the family structure? Was there a "Great Depression" in the 1870s and 1880s? And was the Great War the great divide in British history? When controversial questions of this kind are addressed at all here, they tend to be met with a conventional statement ("World War I marked the end of the old Britain, the beginning of the new", to which one need only add the word "Discuss" to make an argumentative examination question). At least the reader might have been pointed to some of the debates by detailed references, but the book contains none and only a skeletal list of further reading.

There must also be questions about the balance of the contents. The last twenty years, from 1918 to 1939, arguably the most interesting, complex, topical and least well under-

stood, are covered in thirty pages, which include fifteen illustrations. An earlier chapter of twenty-five pages, entitled "Workshop of the World", devotes eleven pages to ships and shipbuilding, followed by a further six on emigration. By contrast, trade unions receive two brief mentions throughout the text, occupying less than one page.

Those complaints made, there is plenty on the credit side. As an introductory survey of salient features of economic and social change the book is always clear, informative, balanced in judgment, enlivened by excellent illustrations and occasional wry humour (like the story of Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, who at the height of the financial crisis in 1931 was recovering from a nervous breakdown on a sea voyage when he received the cryptic telegram, "Old Lady goes off on Monday." He is said to have thought it referred to his mother's holiday plans.) As one would expect from our leading agrarian historian, the chapter on the Victorian countryside is excellent, particularly on the structure of rural society, housing, education and religion. Chapter Six, "Poverty and Wealth", is also very effective: it avoids arid quantification of wages and prices, but deals well with the realities of food and shelter, disease and mortality. But, as Mingay says, "It is easy [and tempting?] to become obsessed by the extent and nature of late Victorian poverty." He gives equally good accounts of the lives of the "respectable" working class, of the growing army of white-collar and white-bosom workers, of the professionals of the reformed Civil Service and armed forces, and of the 322 millionaires of 1919. The book's strength lies in detail of this kind rather than in interpretative conceptualization.

Uncompromising realist

Charles Taylor

THOMAS NAGEL
The View from Nowhere
244pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
019 5036689

In this remarkable book, Thomas Nagel develops, weaves together and extends a number of the philosophical reflections which have been at the centre of his writings and lectures in recent years. They are united by a single basic theme, which one might describe as the human power to attain to objectivity, and all that results from this. His starting-point, therefore, is a certain characterization of the distinction between subjective and objective. "Objectivity", as Nagel uses the term, applies primarily to a mode of understanding. "It is beliefs and attitudes that are objective in the primary sense." A mode of understanding is more objective the more it prescind from the ways of seeing and experiencing reality which are proper to a particular subject, or type of subject. "A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual's makeup and position in the world, or on the character of the particular type of creature he is. The wider the range of subjective types to which a form of understanding is accessible . . . the more objective it is."

Two basic theses are closely connected with this conception of objectivity. The first is that objective understanding is not a yes or no matter; rather it is an aspiration which can be more or less fulfilled, and which has in principle no upper limit. The second is that objectivity is an achievement of human striving over the history of culture; it is not something we possess as part of our species endowment.

What we do possess as species endowment in Nagel's view – and this is central to his whole view of the human condition – is the capacity and the unquenchable aspiration to attain to a more objective viewpoint. There are moments when it seems that Nagel is virtually making this the crucial characteristic of mankind, is defining his philosophical anthropology around it. We are the beings who not only can, but are driven to, adopt "the view from nowhere", without being able to abandon "the view from here", and this is what defines our peculiar form of life, its greatness and miseries, and its unresolvable tensions. As against fashionable sociobiological views, which tend to see our capacity for objective understanding as an immensely useful instrument in the battle for survival, Nagel sees it more as a kind of vocation. "Objectivity is not content to remain a servant of the individual perspective and its values. It has a life of its own and an aspiration for transcendence that will not be quieted in response to the call to reassume our true identity."

This is the leading idea which gives unity and uncommon force to the arguments of this book. Nagel is able to reawaken philosophical wonder at what a remarkable power the capacity for objectivity is, while he sets out to show how a number of familiar philosophical problems can be understood in a new way in the light of this capacity.

The structure of the book is roughly this: after an introductory chapter setting out his conception of subjectivity/objectivity, Nagel first addresses issues connected with the nature of mind and the relation of mind and body in a group of three chapters. He then turns successively to the issues of knowledge, realism and freedom, and, then, in the final four chapters, to the issues of value, ethics and the meaning of life. All of his discussions are clear and insightful, but some reach a level of originality and illumination that opens genuinely new avenues of philosophical thought.

Here I can't do more than touch on some highlights. One of these is undoubtedly Nagel's case against physicalist reductionism, which he makes mainly in Chapter Two. The basic consideration is extremely simple but at the same time compelling. Physicalism, that is, the belief that everything can be explained and understood in terms of the science of physics, and perhaps also chemistry, more or less as we understand these today, can seem plausible because it is the most striking achievement of objective understanding to date. Getting to

this required that we learn to stand outside our own subjective viewpoint, allowing for it as a phenomenon that itself must be explained by scientific understanding. In a sense the emblematic move in this direction was the seventeenth-century distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Nagel shows that these are distinguished by the way they can figure in explanations. Something's being red just is its looking red to normal observers in standard conditions. "To be square, on the other hand, is an independent property which can be used to explain many things about an object, including how it looks and feels." But we have continued this journey beyond the phenomenal with such spectacular twentieth-century moves as those to quantum mechanics and the relativistic notion of space-time.

It is clear where the temptation comes from to make physics our ultimate language of understanding, and to think of it as omniscient, even to the point of offering a reductive account of mind. But it ought equally to be plain, on further reflection, that this position is untenable. The subjective viewpoint, which we have painfully learned to transcend, is also part of the real. So, too, for that matter, is the objective viewpoint, which only comes to be in this ascent from the subjective. That there are such things as viewpoints at all – that things appear to and matter to agents in the ways they do – is as much part of the fabric of the universe as galaxies and novas, even if somewhat less obtrusive. And physics as we understand it today is incapable of accounting for this.

Physicalism, Nagel points out, is a kind of unconscious idealism. It is idealist because it holds fast to the notion that reality must be such as to fit our best explanatory language; so that whatever is beyond this language can be safely declared non-existent. Physicalism is just an application of this crude principle, one which identifies our best language as that of physics in something like its contemporary form. The reductive view of mind then follows. This is a particularly unimaginative form of the doctrine, because it doesn't even allow for future developments of scientific discovery which might induce us radically to alter the terms of our best explanation. It is "an idealism of restricted objectivity". But the striking and ironic conclusion which Nagel comes to is that any view which claims that all of reality can be encompassed in an objective mode of understanding is idealist. Those who in the name of hard science most uncompromisingly exclude the mental and the spiritual, those who beat most stridently their materialistic chests, are actually the only untroubled idealists left on the philosophical scene. But the irony is quite lost on them.

Nagel is an uncompromising realist. And the ravages of idealism on the contemporary philosophical scene can be measured by the length and complexity of the argument he has to deploy in Chapter Six to establish his realist thesis. This he puts in a provocative form. He argues that the conjecture makes sense that reality might in some respects be beyond what we can think of or conceive. Both the empiricist and Kantian streams of modern epistemological thought conspire to make this conjecture seem absurd: reality in principle couldn't do this to us. Nagel attempts to show just how thin the arguments are which allegedly establish this conclusion.

In Nagel's view the temptation to make the objective view omniscient is both understandable and disastrous. Moved as we are by the aspiration to transcend the subjective, hard won as this transcending comes, we are naturally inclined to identify ourselves with it. But as we cannot cease to be particular subjects, to make this identification total is to deny part of what we are; and this way lies disaster. Seen in these terms, the mistake of modern objectivist epistemologies is just one form of this more general tendency. Other forms can be observed in our ethical thinking and attitudes. His main theme allows Nagel to trace analogies between the central problems of epistemology and ethics, which are at times extremely illuminating.

But I for one am less convinced by the arguments in the chapters on ethics than I was by those on the status of mind. And that is because I find his central thesis less plausible here. Every theory of ethics owes us an account

of what it is that actually moves human beings to acknowledge certain pre-eminent demands which we usually characterize as moral. If the theorist wants to endorse some version of ethics, this account must both explain and justify. (If not, a debunking genealogy à la Nietzsche will do.) Plato's Idea of the Good fills this role, as also does Kant's doctrine of rational agency as the only bearer of dignity. Certain modern theories like utilitarianism try to get away without answering the question at all, and either fall into a great muddle in their view of human motivation, or actually suppose an answer which they are reluctant to admit even to themselves.

Now Nagel's answer, consistent with his basic theme, seems to be that what moves us to recognize the pre-eminence of moral demands is the aspiration to justify and defend what we do impersonally, to make it acceptable from other standpoints than just our own. The source of impersonal morality is "a wish to be able to endorse or accept one's actions and their justifications from a standpoint outside of one's particular situation, which is not that of any other particular person either". This aspiration could itself be understood in two ways. We could see it as a natural one for a human being who, in virtue of the human life-form, can come to think about reasons for action at all only through language, and that means through interchange with others. This interpretation could be the basis for something like a Habermasian discourse ethic, which takes as the criterion for the rightness of a moral norm that it could be agreed to in an unconstrained discussion by all those affected. Or else we could understand this aspiration as part of our general drive to transcend the subjective. We wish what we do to be defensible impersonally because we wish to live up to our capacity to attain objectivity. This interpretation has strong affinities to Kant's doctrine of rational agency.

Inconsistent rationalists

Stuart Brown

ARTHUR W. COLLINS
Thought and Nature: Studies in rationalist philosophy
248pp. University of Notre Dame Press.
£24.95.
0268 018561

This book is a collection of papers, one each on Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, and two on Kant. Arthur W. Collins is particularly well equipped to write on seventeenth-century philosophy. Unlike many who write on Descartes and Spinoza, he sees their tendency not to acknowledge their antecedents, and he stresses and makes many good points about their backgrounds in Scholastic philosophy. The essays combine to an unusual degree liveliness, clarity and richness of detail.

Yet the book seems to fall between two stools. Individually the studies are too slight, with the exception of a long essay on "The Metaphysical Elements of Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind", to be significant additions to the literature on the important topics with which they deal. The essays on Spinoza and Descartes's dualism are conceived as a contrasting pair of "options from which philosophical solutions may be chosen". And the two Kant studies, on his "empiricism" and on his treatment of space, fit naturally together. But the essay in the middle, on Leibniz's account of contingency, possibility and freedom, does not fit well with the others.

Collins's defence of Leibniz is an original and interesting one; but it involves attributing to him the view that God "does not fully determine which world will be real", but does, so to speak, allow us a share in determining the future. But the problem is not whether Leibniz wanted to defend free will but whether he can reconcile it with his view that God, in creating each of us, knows exactly what we will do and concurs in our doing it as part of His overall plan. Since that plan is perfect and nothing happens without God's foreknowledge and concurrence, there is a plain sense in which it is fully determined, according to Leibniz, which world will be real. What happens in the world

Nagel himself doesn't discuss these interpretations, but if I get him right, while version of the second. From this standpoint offers a fascinating discussion of some of the central questions of ethics, making a case for realism of values (Chapter Eight), distinguishing the different kinds of moral reasoning (Nine), and finally tackling the issue of how to judge the conflicting demands of impersonal morality and personal fulfilment (Ten).

One of Nagel's central theses is that reconciliation may not be possible between the demands of objectivity and subjectivity in our lives. We will often find ourselves left with unresolvable conflicts. And not only in ethics. It may not be possible ultimately to make sense of ourselves in one coherent, entirely satisfactory picture. This is one of the main points of the chapter on Freedom, where Nagel expresses his dissatisfaction with all the putative solutions offered to the problem of free will. The other main point is an analysis of a new interpretation of what we really aspire to understand, a metaphysical title of freedom, which Nagel calls "objective engagement". I wish I had space to discuss this, for this is one of the original and potentially fruitful passages of the book already very rich in ideas and, incidentally, shows again a profound affinity to the central doctrines of Kant.

The threat of irreconcilable conflict between the two perspectives, and the ineliminable fragile nature of any temporary reconciliation between them, emerges most clearly in the chapter, on "Birth, Death, and the Meaning of Life". To have developed a language in which these can be talked about again by philosophers is not the least of Nagel's achievements in this book, which offers a rare combination of profundity and clarity, along with simplicity of expression. It should be recommended to those who are bored with or in despair about philosophy.

could only be open, for Leibniz, if he were able to allow that there could be more than one equally perfect world. He could then say, as Collins puts it, "insofar as he is free, it is to a man to determine which possible individual he is". But Leibniz could not go along with this consistently with his unbending insistence on the principle of sufficient reason. For there were more than one equally perfect world God would have no reason to create rather than another.

Collins is one of those philosophers who think that the history of philosophy should be studied in order to make progress with our own philosophical ideas and problems. But at least in the essay on Leibniz, this concern diverts him too much on to twentieth-century philosophy and leads him to disregard those of Leibniz's obsessions we do not mostly share. He is by no means a casual scholar, and we doubtless wish to resist – rather than shrug off – the charge that his methodology encourages him to be content with a possible rather than the actual Leibniz. But the structural problems of this collection are ones he barely attempts to conceal. In the preface and in the introductory chapter on "Rationalism and Empiricism" he attempts to overcome them in two ways. First, he suggests that all the essays have an emphasis on the philosophy of mind. He also claims that these philosophers can be grouped together as "rationalists" – as proponents of a point of view that retains an "extraordinary grip" on contemporary philosophy. He fails, however, to give a clear and consistent account of what a "rationalist" is, or even to make up his mind whether Kant was one or not. In the case of Spinoza and Leibniz he simply asserts that they can be "easily documented" from their writings that they are rationalists. In the face of what might seem evidence to the contrary he cheerfully writes about a possible "inconsistency in the rationalist program". There are, of course, often unresolved tensions even in the writings of great philosophers. But historians of philosophy would do well to observe the rule that charges of inconsistency should not be multiplied beyond necessity. Rather than postpone the seventeenth century with inconsistent rationalists it might be better to revise the categories we have imposed upon it.

Friends of the saints

Juliet du Boulay

JOÃO DE PINA-CABRAL
Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve: The peasant worldview of the Alto Minho
258pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0198232551

Attempts at a comprehensive account of a European society in relation to its religious understandings have been rare in European anthropology. In *Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve*, however, João de Pina-Cabral has made just such an attempt, with impressive results. Dr Pina-Cabral's aim is to analyse the "world-view" of the peasants of the Alto Minho – the high north-east part of the province of Minho in Northern Portugal – and to elucidate the shared core of images which give to *minhoto* experience its underlying coherence and meaning. The emphasis is thus on the relation between symbolic meanings and social structure, and details of prescribed or proscribed behaviour are given relatively little prominence. The essential structures and shared images of *minhoto* thinking Pina-Cabral terms the "sub-sistence prototype", consisting, he argues, in the ideal of the agricultural household, the *casa*, based on the head couple and their offspring, drawing its own subsistence from its own land. Health, fertility and prosperity are necessary to the maintenance of the *casa*; but because man lives in a fallen world, the pursuit of these things slips easily into physical indulgence, the birth of illegitimate children who grow up "like little animals", and the escalation of greed. Thus for a fully human order to be realized, marriage and "restraint" within the households, and equality, friendship, and symmetrical reciprocity between them, become vital.

These principles of the subsistence prototype are reflected and enshrined in the encompassing elements of the world-view – in the sacraments, in relationships with saints, and in

a wide-ranging ritual and symbolism which has grown up partly within, and partly outside, the formal Church. These latter rituals range from processions linking households in a single chain of purity, to clandestine visits to an urban brand of white witch, and are designed to prevent or, in the last resort, to render comprehensible, misfortune and envy.

Pina-Cabral carefully elicits the outlines of this fundamental pattern through a thorough comparative method. He studied two parishes, Paço and Couto, respectively somewhat more and somewhat less rooted in the subsistence prototype, owing to differences in wealth, emigration patterns, and ownership of land. So a comparison is made between two localities within the overall values of the agricultural household, a comparison made richer by a concurrent explication of the thinking of the urban bourgeoisie. This thinking, essentially antipathetic to the peasants' world-view, is nevertheless making inroads into it through the increasing prevalence of consumer values, and in particular through the priests who, drawn largely from a literate urban class, have "secularized" their ministry, and are acting as spearheads, if not enforcers, of change. To these comparative themes a historical dimension is added which allows the peasant culture to be seen as a part of a continuing tradition, and illustrates the fact that some of the processes of change, together with the peasants' responses to them, are rooted in much earlier attitudes. In setting the past alongside the present, and two partly differentiated peasant views alongside the bourgeois view, Pina-Cabral provides an unusually rich and complex picture of *minhoto* experience.

Of the many insights which emerge from this study, those concerning feminine sexuality, the maintenance of equality, and the meaning of miracles are of particular interest. Women are symbolically linked with agricultural land and in this respect, as in respect of their fertility, they are critical to the household. At the same time, however, they are thought to have a par-

ticular predilection for the "greed" (a complex of lust, gluttony and envy) which afflicts all humanity, and in consequence they must exercise especial restraint. The agricultural household aims for "reproduction in purity", an argument which is given force by a description of bread-making as being related to the same complex of ideas as the Virgin Birth, and by an interpretation of certain adages relating to pregnancy, birth and baptism, which reveals an inner logic concerning the dangers in reproduction and the necessity of converting the child's animal-like nature into one that is fully human and social.

Control is also necessary to the maintenance of equality in social relationships, and this equality and its associated ideal of mutual cooperation are expressed in the value placed on friendship – between households of unequal as well as of equal wealth. The difficulty of reconciling this ideal with the actual differences in wealth is resolved in a system of mutual help whereby a symbolic reciprocity conceals an actual patronage. And a nice parallel is drawn between this and the relationship of the peasants with their saints, where a votive offering stands for the equivalent of the gift received, thus symbolically transforming an essentially asymmetrical relationship into one between equals.

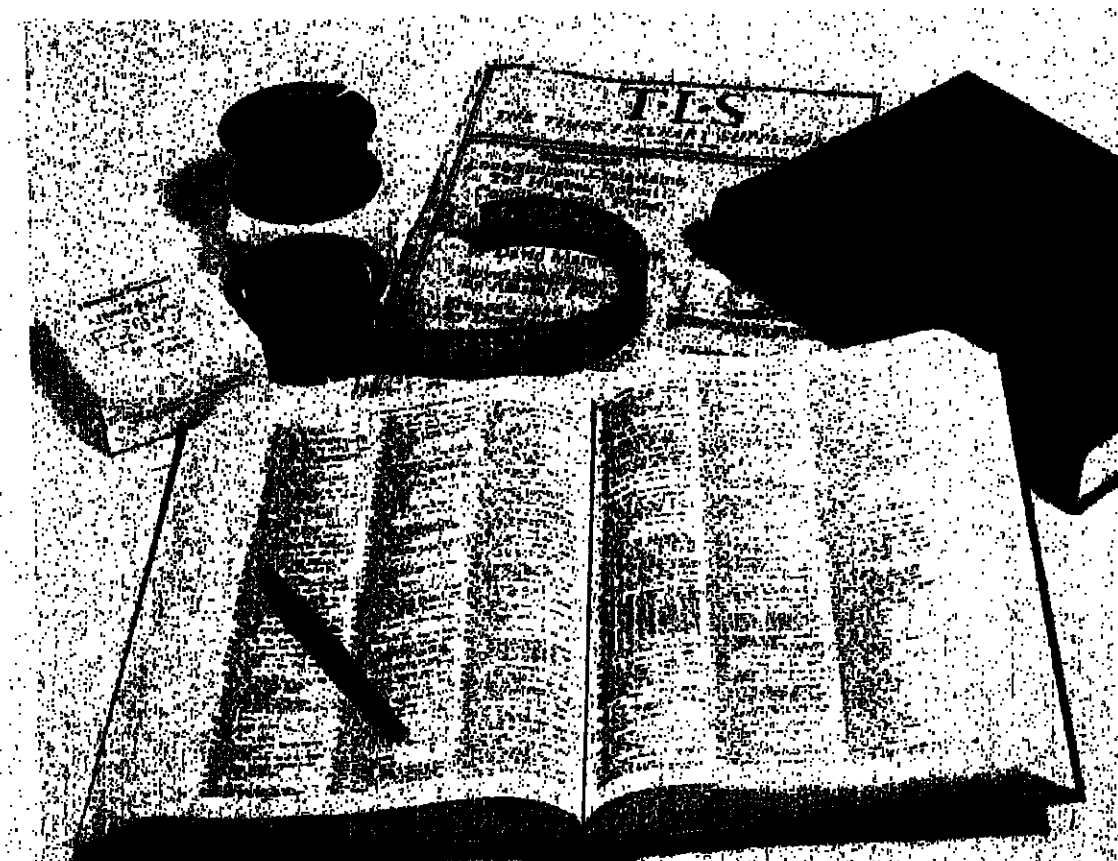
Finally, just as saints are seen as friends, so miracles are experienced as part of the texture of daily life. Hierarchy and a mechanistic universe are attributes of bourgeois, not of peasant, thinking: for the peasant, sacred and profane are interrelated, and a miracle is anything that has been prayed for, or ardently desired, which has come to pass. The peasants are concerned above all with a fusion of the spiritual and the material which can transcend the contradictions between life and death and between physical vigour and an ordered society; and this concern Pina-Cabral finds corroborated in the power of relics, the relation of the living to the souls in purgatory, and the sanctity attributed to those individuals who live in a

state of perpetual fasting – the remarkable figures of the "non-eaters".

This is a book of great scope and quality. If I have criticisms they can be briefly cited – a rather unhelpful index, and at times a sense that the book is not distanced enough from the original doctoral thesis. An index which buries parish rituals under the heading of socio-geographic units, while giving separate heads, engagingly, to octopuses and lampreys, is, to say the least, idiosyncratic. And, primarily in the early chapters, there is a certain laboriousness in the argument, and a tendency to cite information which, though interesting in itself, is not strictly relevant. In these places the thematic unity of the work is submerged, and, particularly in some of the theoretical discussion, the author's link with the imaginative reality of the peasants is sometimes lost. These, however, are minor criticisms. All in all Dr Pina-Cabral has written an unassuming, widely researched and deeply intelligent book, which is a tribute to the peasants of the Alto Minho and constitutes a significant advance in European ethnography.

"Dance provides a spectacle in most societies and an obvious topic for anthropological curiosity, yet curiously it remains largely unsearched." So begins Paul Spencer's introduction to *Society and the Dance: The social anthropology of process and performance* (224pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50; paperback, £7.50. 0 521 30521 7), a collection of essays edited by him in order to answer the neglect. Approaches to the anthropology of dance are illustrated by case examples drawn from Oceania, Africa, Melanesia and South-east Asia. Spencer's introduction offers "interpretations of the dance in anthropology", and subsequent chapters include essays by John Blacking ("Movement, dance, music, and the Venda girls' initiation cycle"), Adrienne L. Kaepler ("Structured movement systems in Tonga") and Andrew Strathern ("A line of boys: Melpa dance as a symbol of maturation").

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Putting the meaning back in struggle

John Turner

JACK JONES
Union Man: The autobiography of Jack Jones
 351pp. Collins. £15.
 0002171724

This is a straightforward, effective and unapologetic book. Unlike Ernest Bevin or Frank Cousins, Jack Jones did not lead the Transport and General Workers Union by the flamboyance of his personality, and his book reflects the clear objectives and lack of cynicism which he brought to his work. It also demonstrates, in a manner which will not be improved upon until the archives are opened, how, and how far, the leader of a major British union could exercise power without being a Member of Parliament.

Jones was born in Liverpool in 1913 and worked on the docks and in the engineering industry until 1937, when he volunteered for the International Brigade in Spain. Wounded at the Ebro in July 1938, he returned to work on the docks. In early 1939 he became a full-time union official, as District Organizer in Coventry. He became Engineering Group

None too classical

John Gray

J. G. MERQUIOR
Western Marxism
 247pp. Paladin. Paperback, £3.95.
 058608454 1

For the connoisseur of the absurd in human thought, it is hard to think of a body of literature more richly rewarding than the writings of the Western Marxists. When you read them — when, say, you find Lukács, in the last chapter of his essay in Kierkegaardian Leninism, *History and Class Consciousness*, describing the Kronstadt rebels as “a corrosive tendency in the service of the bourgeoisie”, or Althusser in his *Reply to John Lewis* explaining the Stalin régime in terms of an unfortunate relapse into the excesses of pre-Marxian humanism, or Adorno, Benjamin and the Left Heideggerians, Marcuse invoking against modern science, technology and Enlightenment rationalism a system of thought, Marx’s, which is redolent of bourgeois technological optimism, modernist tubicrubs and the vulgar Eurocentrism of the lesser thinkers of the Enlightenment — you are never lost for entertainment or edification. Indeed, you almost despair of finding the intellectual historian who can do justice to this wealth of ideas.

In J. G. Merquior's *Western Marxism*, this pessimism is shown to be unfounded. For in this brilliant little book, packed with scholarship and bursting with delightful asides, we have an undevoted intellectual history of Western Marxism in which all of its central paradoxes and absurdities are faithfully chronicled. Merquior begins with an illuminating characterization of Western Marxism as Marxism of the superstructure – a Marxism of cultural criticism, in which the determinist and scientific pretensions of classical Marxism are

suppressed in favour of a humanist doctrine of liberation. Merquior's characterization holds up well in the case of the three seminal figures of Western Marxism; Lukács, Korsch and Bloch, and in a rather different way even in the cases of Sartre and Gramsci, but, as he is quick to point out, it is hard to sustain in respect of Althusser, whose insistence on a starkly anti-humanist version of historical materialism distinguishes him from the body of Western Marxism as a whole. Althusser aside, then, Western Marxists are united by common concerns which transcend the many real differences among them. All exhibit a profound revulsion against the dominant institutions of modern society – a minutely developed system of labour; the modern family with its preoccupation with privacy; and an abstract, impersonal civil society held together by voluntary association and market exchange. In its crudest form, in the writings of the Frankfurt School, this anti-modernism becomes an el-

An English look at Islam

Malise Ruthven

MARMADUKE PICKTHALL
Sold the Fisherman
 312pp. Quartet. Paperback, £5.95.
 0704334887

PETER CLARK
Marmaduke Pickthall: British Mus
 156pp. Quartet. £11.95.
 0704325144

Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936) is now remembered mainly as a translator of the Qur'ān, the first by an English convert to Islam. His fifteen novels and three volumes of short stories have long been out of fashion, just as his prolific writings on international affairs and Islamic culture appear to have been forgotten. The reasons for this neglect are far from obvious. His second novel, *Said the Fisherman* (first published in 1903 and now reissued as paperback), is a minor masterpiece which won praise from H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and D. H. Lawrence as well as from orientalists like Edward Browne and Stanley Lane-Poole. The tale of a Muslim fisherman from Haifa who lies and cheats his way to riches, only to be betrayed and robbed by his captive Christian wife, is both a compelling narrative and a convincing account of Ottoman Syria as seen through Palestinian eyes. It remained in print for a quarter of a century, running to fourteen editions. Though Pickthall's other oriental novels never achieved this degree of success, there was no slackening in output or quality. As E. M. Forster remarked, his "angle of vision remains steady, in book after book".

Pickthall's vision is unusual among Western writers of fiction. As Forster pointed out, he is "one of those rare writers who only feel at home when they are abroad". His English novels, though sometimes witty and socially observant, never quite seem to take off: "Their badness", as Forster had it, "is instructive".

the reason for this discrepancy seems to lie in Pickhall's legendary talent for foreign languages, particularly oriental languages. In his Eastern novels he weaves Arabic words and sentence-constructions into a language which is stylized, though less mannered than Doughty's. Drawing on a vast repertoire of folklore and anthropological observation, he seems to enter effortlessly into an Eastern vernacular and into the skins of his Eastern characters without sentimentality or condescension. The two-dimensional quality of his characters – a weakness in the English fiction – becomes a positive strength, reflecting the semipermanent Islamic world they inhabit. Having established them in their own milieu, where power and honour, deference and patronage and the timeless injunctions of the Divine Law determine everything, Pickhall charts and describes their encounters with the strange and menacing world of the West.

Peter Clark's *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim* is the first study since Anne Fremantle's highly sympathetic biography of her

Clark's study is divided into two parts. The first consists of a biographical sketch in which he documents Pickthall's early life and travels in the Near East, his championship of Turkey before and during the First World War, his spiritual journey from High Anglicanism to Islam and his years in India as a newspaper editor, schoolmaster and adviser to the Nizam of Hyderabad. The second deals with the *New Eastern* fiction and the Tales of England and Europe, and includes summaries of all his major fictional works. This structure seems unnecessarily formal and academic, serving to obscure rather than illuminate the relationship between Pickthall's life and his work. Moreover it is difficult to see what purpose is served by giving separate treatment to the Near Eastern and English fiction, since it is the contrast between them that is so interesting.

Clark achieves his stated aim of describing Pictkhal's conversion to Islam with sympathy, avoiding "sectarian applause or censure". But it would have been helpful to have seen this in the context of his art. Anne Fremantle, who loved and admired Pictkhal, says that he "lost immeasurably as a writer, both in craftsmanship and in prestige, by following his faith". Though Pictkhal suffered for his faith, his social ostracism by the British in India was hurtful both to him and to his wife—he never regretted his conversion.

An interesting question, however, remains, and one which Peter Clark does not tackle: how does Pickthall's "loss" as a writer compensated by his achievement as a translator of the Qur'an? Until the more poetic rendering of A. I. Arberry (a non-Muslim) and the more explanatory version of Muhammad Asad (a convert from Judaism), Pickthall's probably remained the most satisfactory translation available for ordinary readers of English, particularly those who are Muslims. Nevertheless, his *Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (1930) seems today to be rather too dry and over-literal, although in his reverence for the Mosaic scripture he felt constrained to prevent his imagination from lingering over its sensuous impact. Though tolerant and restrained in his religion (as Gandhi remarked after his death, "he lived his faith unobtrusively, with none of the fervor's usual fanaticism") his conversion seems to have dampened, rather than fanned, the ex-

surrounded the election of Moss Evans as his successor, between John Cousins (son of Frank) espousing free collective bargaining and Evans clinging to Jones's line, was an argument about tactics, not principles.

Jones' reputation rests on the "Social Contract" of 1974, and the Dock Work Regulation Bill of 1976. These efforts are now dismissed, either as "corporatism", which the Right deems an offence against the Natural Law of economics, or as a sell-out, which the Left thinks unnecessary in view of its own imminent triumph in the class struggle. Jones himself regards both measures simply as good bargains for his members. He has little time for academics but it was an academic, Robert Currie, who first clarified the link between "free collective bargaining" and liberal capitalism. Corporatist to some degree, the agreements reached by Jones in the 1970s are nevertheless best understood as the best deal he could get for his members in the capitalist society of the time. The conflict within the TGWU which

Sheer determined negotiation was the keynote of Jones's career. He rose to prominence in Liverpool through hard work, and tough attitudes to some very bad employers. In Coventry he raised local earnings, especially for his largely semi-skilled members, by his grip on the essentials of production and his willingness to call a strike rather than lose a good case. In this context, it was very often important to lead his members, to make their side of the bargain stick, but this did not make him the agent either of the State or of the bosses. He is evidently contemptuous of union officials who thought it their main task to get the men back to work. Concomitantly, he supports rank-and-file influence within the union on the grounds that no union official has any lasting power without his members' support.

So, naturally, Jones describes the origin of the Social Contract, which provided for the TUC's moderating wage claims on condition that an incoming Labour government would restrain prices and improve social services, a "jit many ways . . . like negotiating a collective

agreement". It was not socialist planning, it was not underpinned by a theoretical analysis of the economy and its future, and it should not be judged as though it were. It was just a good idea at the time, and even today he makes it seem a much better idea than the alternatives on offer, then or now, so long as it is conceived as an adjunct to planning, not a substitute. In the same way, the Dock Labour Act pushed ahead the logic of decasualization to give some dockers the same job security as, say, the managing director of a medium-sized company with a decent service contract.

It would nevertheless be wrong to reduce Jones's aims to a short-sighted materialism. He is loyal to the Labour Party, and socialist in the sense that he wants more public ownership, and equality between the races and the sexes. All of this grows from an acute class-consciousness, taking the double form of loyalty to his own class and disapproval of middle-class individuals who (unlike officials of the TGWU) can achieve great power without passing stringent examinations in their trade. To a remarkable degree he makes "struggle" — the catchword of the sententious Left — actually mean something recognizable and useful to the members whose interests have been his life's work. This is a difficult act to follow.

Speaking and keeping silent

both from outside and within. The internal debate put Walesa in the role of "pragmatist" insisting against mounting evidence that agreement with the authorities was still possible while a more "fundamentalist" tendency argued that salvation lay in a moral strategy somehow above politics. Here we have a problem for the historian. While Solidarity debated and quarrelled in public, the party did so behind closed doors. Inevitably, a rather one-sided picture emerges, in which preparations for martial law are concealed. It seems certain, however, that contingency plans were drawn up months in advance and the decision to use them taken secretly while the authorities were still calling publicly for "negotiation".

Paradoxically, martial law was Walesa's finest hour. Now he revealed an unsuspected ability: to remain silent. This put paid to the official scheme for a state-run Solidarity with Walesa as its figure-head and helped to bring about the uneasy stalemate which has prevailed in Poland ever since. Outwardly, General Jaruzelski has restored a "Soviet order" under which public demonstrations have been crushed and all institutions other than the Church subordinated to the communist State. But Polish workers, though at present quiet, remain volatile; and it would be rash to rule out further uprisings. Should any occur the government may yet need the hero of the readable biography.

Lech Walesa's origins were obscure, his background typical of Poland's post-war peasantry. Born and brought up in poverty – as a boy he had to walk miles to school in wooden clogs – he none the less managed to obtain technical qualifications fitting him for a career in industry. His moral and spiritual education illustrates the duality common to all Poles. Reared on Sienkiewicz's epic stories of the Polish knights, the mature Walesa shares their sense of romantic – brave but hopeless – insurrectionism, yet this is counter-balanced by a respect for authority both of the Church, the custodian of Polish culture for more than a millennium, and of the armed forces (a respect which surprisingly seems to have survived the imposition of martial law). As this first English biography shows, the young Walesa became

Mary Craig entitles these the "wilderness years". Despite her efforts, which include interviews with relatives, much of this early life seems mundane. As if sensing this, Wales himself inclines to exaggerate his own role. Further research by the author would soon have shown that his part in the first round of coastal strikes in 1970 was less significant than he later claimed. However, the great turning point of 1980 is properly identified. The August, climbing into the shipyard from which he had been sacked two years earlier, to "entered history".

August 1980 revealed the man's exceptional abilities. When, after a week's delay, the government representatives arrived by bus, he steered them safely through the jeering crowds. It was a novel experience for such dignitaries to run the gauntlet of striking work-

ers. During the negotiations that followed, Wales took the chair and intervened politely to demand precise answers each time the deputy Prime Minister evaded issues or took refuge in vagueness. Between plenary sessions, he kept up morale by leading the hymn-singing and delivering hypnotic, "if ungrammatical and almost untranslatable, addresses to the waiting crowds. To the astonishment of observers, the party settled the strike without force, though military preparations were undoubtedly well advanced. The sixteen months of Solidarity ensued.

Against all the odds, a mass movement dedicated to non-violence, came into existence and held together despite intense pressure.

ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV

The Madhouse

A NOVEL

**Translated by
Michael Kirkwood**

**A brilliant satirical critique
of Soviet society by the
author of *The Yawning Heights***

'Ought to be required reading for anyone caring about the running of half the world' - Daily Mail

Gollancz

من اجله

Remainders

Eric Korn

GOD (SOMERSET CC AND ENGLAND) IS NOT DEAD!

If the T-shirts are not yet proclaiming the Assumption of the Holy Batman, they soon will. I hadn't realized how far Ian Botham had become savour-of-the-month in home theogonics circles until I heard a sports commentator say "Well, that's it then; not even Botham can stop the rain", and realized that *he didn't believe it*. It was in fact one of those without-prejudice prayers offered by folk paddling in the shallows of belief: "Oh-oh, no one can help me now. I bet", we exclaim, raising our voices and coughing slightly in the hope that Someone will overhear us.

We could do a lot worse than Botham. We need a few uncomplicated minor worshippers, not your omnipotent and eternal Creator of the Universe, King of Kings and all that; lord of Lords maybe, an unassuming, rustic and temporary Kingship only: "that's a majestic stroke", declared my commentator: "a bucolic stroke maybe, but a majestic one". This combination is just what we look for in the modern god-concept. As the consumer magazine *What Delfy?* observed in a recent editorial:

In an energy-poor society, the old style all-purpose divinity, the labour-intensive, prayer-guzzling juggernaut is increasingly being replaced by the more modest single-function, dedicated demiurge. Today's worshipper is not prepared to pay the going rate for transcendence, and immence is seen as something of an embarrassment. Prudent votaries are trading in eternal Judges for a matched set of culture heroes, nature deities and totemic figures.

The glossy adverts tell the same story. Sinlessness is seen as grishish, slowness to anger as irrelevant to the challenges of today. The major dealers (Many Mansions of Manchester, House of God, Stockport) have a full inventory of micro and mini gods, lures, idols, fetishes and nats. And the Blessed Botham makes a useful addition to the range, along with Dagon and Dagan, Gilgamesh and Gilgalad, Cu Chulain and Kukulcan (another day we'll go into that one, how the Irish discovered Central America, the Mayo-Maya connection). These are persons with superhuman strength and human failings, bags of charisma but a touch unreliable, given to errors and rages, madness, heroic laments for the loss of comrades, travellers, exiles (omnipresence, once fashionable in deities, is specifically forbidden by the laws of cricket), teachers of useful arts, herb lore and new songs, strikers of great strokes and victims of inexplicable bans.

The name is a hint. As Any Good Dictionary relates, *botham* is an obsolete form of *bottom*: "tha he on botme (thaereon helle) stod" says Caedmon's *Satan*, playing the usual apostate's trick of turning the elder gods into demons; reminding us of that other botham, the

zocephalic Bottom, weaver of the web and the west of the world, Guardian of the boundaries, from whence he will return to judge the living and the dead; and then I wouldn't be in a Test Selector's boots for all the chai in China.

* * *

(U.S. readers begin here)

I listen to radio speak-persons with gusto. The other day, one got the weather report from something called the Bureau of Climactic Research; and during a phone-in about spelling difficulties, a phonic-in, someone remarked "Before I took that course I was practically dickslectic".

* * *

I was in a dickslectic deli the other day and there were two delicacies sharing a plate: they were labelled *truffles* and *ruffles*. That, I thought, was a poser for transformational grammarians, who will surely look for the shift in function represented by the fronting of the vowel, or whatever; the same shift as in *butter*/bitter, puzzle/pizzle.

* * *

Here's a man who could use a transformational grammar, or at least a sense that there are linguistic possibilities that the Romans never knew. The Procrustes Prize (bronze statuette of a left foot in a right-hand glove) goes to the Ven. Robert McDonald, Archdeacon of the Mackenzie, for conjugating an Amerindian verb with the apparatus of Kennedy's Latin Primer. This he does in *Grammar and Dictionary of the Tukudh Language* (SPCK 1911). I had a problem about who spoke it, since the Archdeacon gives no clue, apart from a mention of going to Winnipeg from Fort Simpson in one of the sample sentences—but then another sample is about Alexander the Great going to Persia. The all-inclusive *Les Langues du monde* doesn't mention Tukudh, and it isn't in *OED* or *SOED* (Burchfield, art thou sleeping there below?): for a wild moment I surmised that the Archdeacon had made up the whole thing, like Psalmazar's Formosan, or else that the language had died with him, the last handful of tribesfolk mute with induced aphasia, resulting from his habit of demanding that they parse each word: "Tissi nenyiwot chashit. *Mosquitoes annoy us*. Tissi is a common substantive, of the neuter gender, the third person, the singular number and the nominative case. Chashit is an irregular verb etc. . . . Tissi looks a great word for mosquito, but I can't say how it sounds, for the Archdeacon sturdily declares "consonants are sounded as in English" after listing a few unEnglish looking combinations like *kkw*, *tdh*, and *rsr*. There are sixty-odd pages of Latinified verbs: Vvakhzyunnyiwhtrootutatsht (we will

be sleepy) Vvakhzyunnyiwhtrootutatsht (we will be sleepy). Did he ever notice that the three dozen forms of the verb *to be ignorant* on page 17 were identical with the three dozen to *know* (negative form) on page 18, except in the second person plural of the imperative? Did he ever have doubts? Modern grammarians of Athapascan (which is where Tukudh belongs, apparently now called Kutchin) speak of a dozen or so prefixes before the verb stem followed by nominalizing enclitics, whatever they may be: but I doubt if the Archdeacon was worried. The vocabulary is fuller of Archdeaconery than Athapascery: it contains unexpected words like *coalition*, *disestablish* and *formalist*. They have *coalmines* and *elephants* up there, but I am glad to report that they didn't go in for *embezzlement* much, judging from the fact that their expression for it is *lithle enjit isi kunihyit khutututut onihnji* (pronounce it like English): poor souls, that may be what did for them.

* * *

O ye poets of these latter times, profit from the example of Joseph W. Sault, sweet singer of Welwyn. In *Garden Citizens of Today and Tomorrow* (New Freeman, St Albans, 1937), now generally recognized as his *chef d'oeuvre* (see *Fifty Years of Sault Studies: A Festschrift, practically passim*) the poet-chronicler of the New Towns, compatriot of Shredded Wheat, sometime editor of the *Welwyn Garden City and Hertfordshire Pilot* (before it was incorporated into the *Welwyn Times*), commits himself boldly to a poetry that speaks for Everyman (to say nothing of every man) while remaining profoundly rooted in a sense of place, a poetic for which no occasion was too sublime or too mundane.

Garden Citizens of Today and Tomorrow will stand comparison, up to a point, with Crabbe. *Spoon River Anthology* likewise springs unbidden to mind. Sault has attempted nothing less than a diachronic and synchronic directory of Welwyn, its history and hopes, its traumas and its triumphs. The Founder (the Late Ebenezer Howard, OBE) stands first, of course: "Your plans to cheek gross ignorance/ In building towans, / Now seem such simple, common-sense, / But, well we know the human mind / Is blind". After him, what a colourful pageant of characters! There is Councillor W. R. Hughes ("the English gift of compromise / here functions at its best, /"), Councillor George Lindgren, CC ("and now he mingles with the mighty / to rescue poor old Blighty"), Councillor E. D. Pinner ("Building good roads was your task / When Welwyn first was founded") and Councillor Jane Pinner ("Sound

Democrats must pass, / Alas"), to say nothing of Councillor C. B. Purdom, the Urban District Council Staff, Mrs Richard Wallhead (Widow of the late Richard Wallhead MBE), Francis H. Burn Esq of the *Welwyn Times* (a thankless task some men refuse for Welwyn, boils with extreme views"), the Police, the Railway Staff, and Jesus Christ, King of Welwyn.

But Sault doesn't stop there. After a brief excursion into prose to discuss the topic of municipalities issuing their own banknotes, a subject on which, as on so many others, he can only be described as Welwyn-formed, he back into poetry for twelve pages of adverts, a brilliant and I suspect unique way of financing the publication. And the adverts, it must be admitted, inspire him more than the local world. If his praise of Mrs W. E. August is a little hesitant ("Your plays in Welwyn woods have never been excelled"), his acclaim of The Welwyn Stores is unstinting, not to say rickshacking.

We give you hearty welcome to the famous Welwyn Stores
With sixty-odd departments and its ever open doors
For drapery, good food and drink, for household goods galore,
For milk and fruit, for cheese and tea, coming to Welwyn Store.

which doesn't prevent him doing just as well in the London Stores ("If you need a kitchen cupboard / Or linoleum for the floors, / Take bus to St Albans, / and . . ."); the Bridge Restaurant, Barclay Corsets ("Directors and the staff all know, from John O'Grady to Dorset . . ."), Lemsford Garage ("Why worry, when we've careful men / to keep your car smooth running; / Ring WELWYN GARAGE 390, / Enjoy your Sunday morning"), and the sombre elegance of the Harkness Roses Ok ("Time has proved that Welwyn's soil / is so able for roses, / Visitors from foreign shores Admire the streets and Closets". In "Hilite Laundry" he excels himself:

So, 'phone the HITCHIN LAUNDRY,
And don't forget to mention
You saw the laundry's name
Mentioned in these pages.
The versifier needs his hire,
Like most, he lives by wages.

It may not be immediately obvious what is happening here. Joseph Sault is getting the advertiser to pay for an advertisement for his services as a writer of advertising verse, the advertisements subsidizing his less lucrative poetry of social value. (I have not even considered the possibility that he got a sub from the councillors.) If this catches on, there is a new glittering supply-side future for poetry. We could even dispense with the Arts Council's end of civilization as we know it.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

M. S. Anderson's *The Ascendancy of Europe, 1815-1914*, 1972, appeared in a second edition this year. T. J. C. Beebe is a lecturer at the School of Biology at the University of Sussex, and the author of *Progeny Tods*, 1984.
Robert Brala is the author of *Friends and Lovers*, 1977, and *Black and White Rites*, 1979.
Stuart Brown is Professor of Philosophy at the Open University. He is the editor of *Reason and Religion*, 1977, and the author of *Leibniz*, 1984, in the Philosophers in Context series.
John Burnett is the author of *A History of the Cost of Living*, 1970, and *Plenty and Want: A social history of diet in England from 1815 to the present-day*, 1979.
John Clute's novel *The Disinheriting Party* was published in 1977.
Gavin Colquhoun-Brookes is working on a study of William Styron.
Don Cupitt is Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. His most recent books are *The Sea of Faith*, 1984, and *Only Human*, 1985.
Richard Dorement's *British Painting in the Philadelphia Museum of Art* will be published this autumn.
Juliet Du Boulay's *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* was published in 1974.
Peter Gay is Sterling Professor of History at Yale. He is completing a large-scale biography of Freud.
John Gould is Professor of Greek at Bristol University.
John Gray is a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. His *Mill on Liberty: A defence* was published in 1980.
A. Kemp-Welch is the author of *The Birth of Solidarity*, 1983.
John Kidd is a research fellow at the University of Virginia working on Joyce.
Hugh Lawrence is Professor of Medieval History at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London. His books include *Medieval Monasticism*, 1984.
Colin Mackerras is the author of *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to the present day*, 1973.
Richard Osborne's *Rossini in the Master Musicians Series* has recently been published.
Mark Ridley's most recent book is *Animal Behaviour*, which was published earlier this year.
E. C. Riley's study of *Don Quixote* was published at the beginning of this year.
Malles Rutherford's *Islam in the World* was published in 1984.
Clancy Sigal is Professor of Journalism at the University of South California.
C. H. Staddon's new verse translation of *The Aeneid* will be published later this year.
Jack Stephens's stories are included in *First Fiction: Faber Introduction 9*, which has recently been published.
Brian Stock is a Fellow of the Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto. His most recent book is *The Implications of Literacy*, 1983.
Julian Symonds's study of the origins of Literary Modernism will be published next year.
Charles Taylor's books include *The Explanation of Behaviour*, 1964, and *Hegel*, 1975. His *Philosophical Papers: Volume One: Human agency and language* was published last year.
Malcolm Warner is currently writing a *catalogue raisonné* of the works of J. E. Millais.

TLS/CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE POETRY COMPETITION

From an entry of 4,500 poems the judges - U.A. Fanthorpe, Blake Morrison, Hugo Williams, Alan Hollinghurst and Holly Eley - have shortlisted the eighty-four printed below. Readers are invited to make their own choice of first, second and third prizewinners on the ballot form at the foot of this page. Before the outcome of the ballot is known the judges will meet to make their separate selection, and prizes of £500, £250 and £100 will subsequently be given in both categories. The winners will be announced in the *TLS* of October 3, along with the names of the authors of the shortlisted poems (those wishing to remain anonymous if they do not win a prize should contact the Competition office at the address below before September 12). The winning poems will be read at the prize-giving at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, at 12.30pm on October 12.

1. The Emperor Of Saliva

A glistening drop hanging from his lower lip,
swollen in anticipation of polythene,
nylon, fur or felt,

this salivating infant, toga towelled after bath,
plucks tea-bags from the rubbish bin
and dangles them above his mouth.

Saddling my neck, he tucks his knees
behind the flaps of my ears,
amahout on his elephant,

and with Urduh cries
grasps at the crowds we pass,
the heavy curtains, long potted leaves

rubbing his soft body.
No material left unsoaked or perversion
unexplored,
a wet moon spreading down his vested chest,

so the handbag, bucket, retreating ball
have become the victims of his domain.
A debaucher of this quiescent retinue

he sucks the nob of the tea pot lid
and pushes his finger down the spout.
He waves a medicine bottle in the air,

shown glass pendulum,
to and fro, to and fro,
then hits his forehead and screams.

A subject has struck back
and he throws the rebel
toshmash on the floor.

2. The Shutters

I take a rotten photograph
I always have.

Mother, what the album shows again and again
is the three of us - two women separated
by a generation, a marriage bed
and a single, spoilt son.

We three pose at the backdoor -
you hold the pedal car I steer
but Gran perches my bear on the bonnet
and I'm looking at her.

Down our garden path at Pentrefelin
I threaten the flower border
toddling towards the camera
buffered at chest and bottom by her strong hands.

On the green at Llanstephan
I sit smiling, on the bench next to Gran
and Mother, you are looking knives
into the side of her head.

Was that a moment before or after
the one that has me in the crotch
of her broad arm, tickled while Dad jokes
to hold his pipe to her smoking ear?

In all those snaps
Gran took a good photograph
face set to the lens. A look
that unnerved my father's grip -

each print has strokes of wild light
that flamed through the clumsy shutter.
What shapes us is clear, developed, fixed tight.
The two of us are still there, Mother.

My choice of poems is:

(1)	Name:
(2)	Address:
(3)	

Please post this coupon to: Poetry Competition Ballot, Cheltenham Festival of Literature,
Town Hall, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 1QA, to arrive not later than September 19.

4. Woman in a White Hat

She has collected her face
from the doubts of the mirror.
She wears it now
with a winter frown,
a faded recollection of frost,
a proposal of spring
if she could only find
the first greening of a hyacinth
on a cold morning. The flowering
of a bulb she might have planted.

They are still there
in their box on the shelf.
An autumn inspiration of colour,
a bevy of bulbs. Tulips,
anemones, hyacinths, daffodils;
yellow, blue, purple, red.
Dulbous bulgings.
In their box the onion skins crumble on
touch.

Her eyes are focused on a distant dream
which isn't there
or here, in spring or winter.
Her hands are composed
like a prayer to etiquette,
like a mouth mincing power
on a grey day with no frost,
a quiet day with no sun.
Only her white hat
sways in the wind with her auburn hair.

5. Expectant

It's always strange waiting for people,
impossible to believe, as the minutes pass,
that the likelihood of their arrival is
increasing rather than otherwise.
Contrarily you reflect on
how very many people
are not the one that you are waiting for.

After about half an hour,
you begin to think the worst.
They will never come again.
Or again your hopes are raised
by the most passing resemblance,
and you begin to look at cars
of a completely different make and colour,
clothes they would never wear.
So that when they do arrive, they're surprisingly
entirely and unmistakably themselves.
How foolish to think that they would change
because absent from your love.

3. Olympic Airways, Stop-Over Athens

This smorkling Greek woman
carried late on board a Jumbo
going home in near-coma
to kiss her village goodbye
is annoying hell out of
her fellow global passengers.
A body like that, all helpless
and goggle-eyed, out of depth
in intensive care, behind a sharp
orange curtain, takes up four seats,
one of which was mine.
London does good business
with magic operations (super-
tech hippocratic) at a price
marvellous, raising the dead.
She gargles, snorts, gets pure
oxygen and, hand held, doesn't need
her seatbelt fastened.
Our fat tyres kiss the smoking black.

6. Everything about Hartley

Establishment confirmed:
One Police Magistrate - £250 per annum.
One Chief Constable - £75 per annum.
One Watchhouse Keeper - three shillings per day.
One Ordinary Constable - two and ninepence per day.
Two Ordinary Constable - two and threepence per day.
One Scourger - two and six pence per day.

2.
Issued to Hartley native tribe, May 1841:
fifty blankets. Found to be insufficient.
Eighty blankets in 1842.
1846: twelve.
"The aborigines of our district had always
been remarkably quiet,
and died out rapidly."

3. *The Courthouse*.
A Greek temple built around a lock-up.
Its sandstone columns
taper to perfect Doric.

In the constables' room
a vast fire and massive powder horns
to frighten the shuffling felon.

The magistrate's private room is silent
with the smell of oiled cedar.
Dieu et mon droit.
Nine tails of the whip.

Bay windows behind the sentencer prove
that justice is beauty.

7. Gala Day

'Gala Day' on the Hastings/Tonbridge line
was all 'special attractions and displays. . .
50p per person (Adult or Child)'.
They'd painted stations right along the way
and hung out plastic flags - red, white and blue.
The programme had a picture on the back -
The Wrotham White Star Sword Dance Team
at work
- six knickerbockered blokes with left legs raised;
the youngest had baggies under one arm;
the fattest held a pentacle of swords;
they all had beards, bow-ties and cummerbunds.

A harassed beauty queen came round the train
with pencils, beer-mats, biro, stickers, bags
and 'twirly hats'.

I didn't see a lot that day.
I somehow missed the Sunoak Ladies Clog
Dance Team
I didn't hear 'Sussex Brass' silver band,
or take the vintage bus at Etchingham
for Bodiam Castle's armour videos,
or get a discount at Kentucky Fried.

I just stopped off in Tunbridge Wells for wine -
Lamberhurst Vineyard gave free tastings there -
then thought I'd try some village pub for lunch.
I got the train and looked for likely stops.

First, I tried Frant - or rather, Bells Yew green,
which has no bells, no yew and little green.
Frant I discovered was a winding mile uphill
and out of sight - an English signpost mile.
The Brecknock Arms did not do food, they said.

Back to the train. A stop or two away
I managed to get a Stilton Ploughman's Lunch.
The landlady looked fat and deaf and mad;
the barman left his beerpils run and run;
there were a thousand trippers at the door.

My last stop off was for a country church -
the finest in the county, someone said -
a fourteenth-century one with a small tower,
veridigised Xs bolted through all sides.
I bought a notelet in the porch, I don't
know why - a brass-rubbed lady and two knights -
de Echyngham with piously folded hands
and lions sitting at their pointed feet.
(Richard Goulden R.A. had done the print.)
The envelope was all gummed up with damp.
I stuffed it in my bag and ran across
some muddy graves to catch the waiting train.

8. Prickly Pears and Oranges

Prickly pears are a rabble of headless men
Whose limbs have yellow flowers drooping
Like cotton gloves with empty fingers.

Their fruit first appears livid as a rash
Then matures in carbuncular clusters.
Harvested they are pruned back to thickets

High and close enough to deter small boys
From banditry in the formal orange groves
Where young gosses play king-of-the-castle.

Hacked, burnt then ploughed in deep by
claimants
To a promised land they resurrect
In a straggles of spiky ovals.

They re-assert boundaries of alfalfa,
Of villages deliberately unnamed,
Settled over, portioned in another tongue.

Rooted out again they still spring up
From the hidden stubbornness of seed,
A vegetable remembrance

Long after incinerated title deeds.
Long after the requisition document
Whose lie is 'for reasons of security'.

Long after the exodus of smallholders
Bemused old men on donkeys dreaming.
As they rode away, of prickly pears

And oranges - circles of ripeness,
Gloves of paradise beneath glossy leaves -
Which could be quartered easily

For the satisfaction of the palate.
Now the memory of their taste provides
Bitterness for the politics of loss.

It is difficult to eat the prickly pear.
You have to soak it overnight
Otherwise the brittle spines break off

Then splinter as they lodge beneath your skin.
But if you manage to survive you open
A sweetness whose softened rind parts at
your touch.

9. The Fossil

'If necessary we can go back to the desert.'
Reported of King Faisal during the oil
crisis of 1974.

As is the custom we have perched
On thorn bushes a slim haunch
Of mutton and the rice we cannot eat -
Clear of the ground so only birds may feed.

Now under an acacia we sip tea
And watch dust devils skeedaddle
Along the highway's grainy liquorice
Between a frail, odd expanse of seedlings.

Here iron giraffes clatter and lean down.
Their unimaginable mouths drink
From levels hundreds of feet beneath
As tankers, their round calves, suck water
from them.

Sayer Al Harthy offers me a cigarette.
His robe's linen whispers with the gesture
Like paper tissue drawn from a box.
He has shown me the omega shape

Of stones which form a Bedu mosque
And explained with so few words that I think
Not even enormous wealth can drown
Habits made by the economics of thirst.

He points to the fossil I have found,
A bean-sized snail or nautilus
Stone-dry for millennia, and asks
'Teacher, tell me, where does this thing come
from?'

Out of courtesy or cowardice
I answer 'From the time of dinosaurs
And Noah when men pruned to animals
So that God covered the earth with water.'

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10. Set to Last

Bonewear he sat, the paper a tent across his stomach, hand collaring his working boots set ready for cobbling beside a piece of hide a neat rectangle the colour of weak tea curled slightly, the leather shop clung to its curve.

Kate saw him choose this piece, discard others too thin or shiny, dealing them patiently on the wooden counter, Tom stacking them back, their conversations economical as poker players. Tom played close, made Dad sort the pack.

He slid out deftly a piece from under, with a sly grin to be matched by Dad's, scooped tangles and sprigs inside paper twists gave those to her with humbugs magicked from his sleeve the mint taste oozed into the brown smell of the shop.

With a gentle hiss of breath like iron steam he sighed, folded his paper precisely, began, wrapped his apron round, front-tied the strings. Like a solemn apprentice she copied and watched: they could hear the bubbles of gas in the coals.

His tongue mimed the boots' curled up in concentration, his brow textured as leather. He eased a pencil stub around the sole, cut it with a razor blade, Kate lifted his polished boot foot creased, walked it on her hand.

Dad levered the old sole, brittle and thin tore free the tussure of leather with its picket of nails, set the boot upon the last. His grasp locked the hummer, brought it down sharp, accurate, tacking the sole.

Brownball wax tucked under the tip of the iron; he nodded and she set it to heat, rocker-shaped on the grate, while he pared the leather edge and she crayoned wax around its curve. He ironed it smooth and the brown smell steamed.

Dad fingered tobacco in his pipe; Kate fetched brushes, Kiwi tin, the velvet pad and smeared polish, he brushed the shine but she buffed them with a velvet heart, saw his smile reflected as he leaned them against the fender.

11. Yakub
I am Yakub, my wife Ayshe.
Our work is living in the Priest's House keeping the English church from dereliction.

This church is a freakish thing. Inside and out the masonry is naked. The roof is sharp, grey, and cold, like a mountainside. It has no dome.

Its door is like a prison's, black wood clasped in blacker iron. When I go in I am in a cistern of echoes.

Where are the English? Didn't they put up these stones to memorialize their dead Russian-killers eternally? Well they forgot them.

We Turks look after their church now, oiling rusty locks and hinges, poking dead birds' nests from high corners.

There is a tower and, oh, a stiff old bell. And sometimes Ayshe likes me to clamber up and make it swing. Then the people of Beyoglu stop in their tracks

and Ayshe calls out to them: 'Listen! This is their English muezzin. How cracked he is.' Then her laughter rings from the house.

12. A Wink
You left me, browsed along the aisle, Then bent and tucked behind your ears Blond hair that curtained off your smile Above a tray of freckled pears:

And apples in blue tissue, Kate, its hairsprung formulations and its tight, fastidious detail 'That oversimplified your hand.' Beside you swung red plastic nets Of oranges and mandarins And glendular, pumped-up courgettes And onions' futuristic skins; While parsnip, ginger's khaki prongs, A mushroom's fanblade, mirrors where Washed plums and peaches lounged among Albino clouds of cauliflower. The owner's hands were fat and thick With earth and dirt beneath their nails, He took your money with a wink Then joked behind his dejected scales; I watched him eye you up and saw The nelson's halved, absorbent mouths Grin back, like me, at shadow where His fingers almost impaled your blouse.

13. And There was Light
When I was just a wee tourist in the language my father'd repeat his mother's 'Fiat Lux!' - about all he knew of Latin, but it brought her a mite closer out of the muck that's before-my-time. (I drop such memories down the well to hear them bounce and rattle off the years.)

She caught him once sneaking into the house, on leave from Flanders where he'd seen bits of his friends left on trees, and couldn't speak of the horses. 'So it has come to this -' her voice from the stairs a tartan of outrage and despair, black bombazine at full stretch - 'newspapers on the Sabbath!'

'She could have ticked off God', he said forty years after, not smiling. 'I've still the only book she'd touch on that day when sunlight was forbidden, curtains pulled against the Devil's glittery sheen. Her name's there on the fly-leaf, Margaret from Anna married to James a hundred copperplate years ago in Cumberland: I know the village - sandstone the colour of a girl blushing.

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Not just the War was skewing her world. Candles and the slow, sad thrum of gas had gone: each new-fangled globe looked more at home in Alma Place than she ever felt, expecting catastrophe each night among the Sassenachs of Shields.

Out of sight her family smiled, but she didn't forget how all our days grow shorter all the time. She'd go from room to room, holding her breath till she grew dizzy, daring it to work, daring it not to work: click-Ah! click-Ah! click-Ah! yes!

14. Voices of Candia
death rides up and down on his mule hunting whom he can catch unawares he's slow but very patient and he throws in the bright sunlight no shadow; his mouldy lip will kiss yours at the last!

at dawn the sea is grey as your eyes but then when the light strikes on it suddenly the colour is all honey at noon the water is a blue sky but night brings me your grey eyes again

Manósuos, you stink like my father's goat, why do you follow and pester me? your eyes squint and your feet are too big you are in everything too big except the part where it matters

my love, I bring you yoghurt and honey but you sit with the other men in the kaphenelon and pretend your eyes downcast, not to see me stand - still you play tavli, you laugh and shout

I run down to the shore to greet you with singing following your footprints but here they are joined by another's come, waves, wash away these others! we can only wash both away, they said

there's a wedding in the next village but out on the mountain we hunt our goat she is forever escaping now there will be new young ones next Spring listen, they fire guns from the windows

your mouth is sweet as the mulberry but you let that foul bitch taste it how can I bear to drink from the place she savoured? I turn away my face now I will drink only mouróráki

all winter I have kept in the house watched by the smoking fire the storm rage; which are more weary, these dark days or the empty nights when the moon's rays shine in on the bed I once shared with you?

I cannot hate you, my Mandlis you are a man and she has bewitched you there under her mother's olive trees - but could my nails make friends with her eyes I assure you they'd soon fall out!

that pink blossom marks my highest field up there mother paused one Spring: Death said politely Good Morning; suddenly she sat down, her back to an almond tree each Spring on this day she sits there

NOTES:
kaphenelon - coffee shop
tavli - board game similar to backgammon
mouróráki - grape spirit flavoured with mulberries

15. Rush Hours
The ride to school past the creepers we snapped in woodbine lengths and tried to smoke.

Mornings of far that smelled of soap, a breath of June through aertex shirts

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The ride to school past the creepers we snapped in woodbine lengths and tried to smoke.

Mornings of far that smelled of soap, a breath of June through aertex shirts

or winter when the potholes scabbed with ice and our tyres hissed paths over frost.

Empty hedges: the mist that filled horizons and gaps between the thorns. A small, chill sun.

There were seasons that were abstract too, nothing but the tarmac that unrolled its camber and edges

to crumble under our cycle wheels. We swung the front forks towards the lane's brow

and swept down the hill, exaggerating the dip of the gutter, the plantains' blur on the verge.

Now I'm tunnelling into work through a suburb of tobaccoists and small shops.

It is the season of faces that are held in rear-view mirrors and misunderstood.

16.
Nanny and the Silver Cross pram Rounded the corner and found A paradise in place of Florence Park.

Nanny, blushing, raised her eyebrows, But soon compressed them to a frown: No mere naturists will part a nanny and her outing.

The magnificent pram pressed on Through the green municipal gates, Turning up thick white petals which had strangely strewn the paths.

The air grew warm and smelled as if A thousand perfumes had been spilled. Looking around wide-eyed, baby swallowed her lost cries, And nanny, oh nanny found her pockets filled With scented sweetmeats, peaches and fresh figs.

A green glass egg which had been her mother's And which child nanny had smithereened In her terrible, terrible temper;

And other favourite small forgotten things from childhood.

17. Government Expatriate House Type 1F
I live austerely here but without effort, finding my needs are limited and desire dispensable. My few visitors leave quickly, seeking escape from my terrifying politeness.

This large unpeopled house becomes dirty and redundant. It was never right for the family, but now it clearly resents my sole reluctant tenancy.

There is no service of course - the maid, with my connivance, having left last month for a place with a purpose (two kids there and a couple who knew what they wanted).

So I rotate a four-day supply of utensils, more or less living off one corner of the table, eating my leftovers punctually, with fastidious indifference.

It's an abuse really, living like this in a house that sighs with the heat. I let myself camp here, so to speak - a trespasser in a place I displease.

And part of me quite likes it - expanse of strange space, empty bedrooms, dust and the absence of noise. I creep about possessively, like a squatter in a mansion.

But at night sometimes I am kept awake by banging fly-screens or the groans and creaks of a contracting roof - voices telling me, I suspect, to leave and hand over the keys.

I will go soon and then it will be over, our home in Botswana: Here we have spent several years experimenting with development - in one form or another

18. Discovery
The first peculiarities of this year's snowlight break up the bedroom lin.

There's a crackle of news in the lin. All is well. Yet the difficulty is to convey information which is true, while avoiding fear which is unnecessary

yet maintain hope which is essential. In a mess of sensual pleasure and desire

It rose obediently to hand as I soaped my breasts, in my left, quite low down

Unmistakeable. How long have I been this featureless cloud over my heart?

Water gems and drains from my feet The radio chuckles at my trembling

The schoolkids crowd off yet another bus. They're filmed in rain. I stop, stand behind the wipers' arc and check I'm clear at the traffic light before I pull away

to snick the gear home, once more with a small flamboyancy. The plantain leaves, a lane's known name

On the Stacs round Boreray, while puffins Scattering back wave-high to Dun Would prove a safe guide home to Hirta And the Village Bay.

For fifty empty miles over the Oily pitch and swell of the grey North Atlantic. Any St Kildans, Out of sight of land, with bad weather closing, Knew they'd only to watch the flight-paths Of the birds: guillemot and gannet would wreck them

II
Birds. Or angels even They must have seemed, the women Plucking in a cloud of feathers, At the haul of fulmar their menfolk

Had themselves plucked off the cliffs Of Conachair; cragmen spidering Thirty fathoms down, along ledges Of guano, dependent on sheer faith

In their neighbours and on a horsehair rope. Claim life those cliffs could, but always would Sustain it while there were sea-birds In such thousands to stew or dry;

Even a gannet's neck, turned inside out, Made a snug boot, and oil from the fulmar Not only fuelled their lamps, but was a panacea For no matter what ills or ailments of the island.

III
Ultima Thule it was until the Victorians Sent in their missionaries To pound out the parable of the Prodigal Son To people who hadn't anywhere to stray to And had never seen a pig.

Then steamers came, and summer visitors With ginnerack charities and new disease, Tipping the cragmen with a penny each To see them capering about on Conachair:

IV
By lantern-light They loaded a few more sticks Of furniture and the last of the sheep, And then they drowned their dogs.

Things are what they appear. We grow beans, peas I hoe weeds among the beetroot.

We have taken root ourselves and grow more at ease with each other.

Few old friends bother to call. There are no brilliant people here.

Sometimes in the night I think of one who was dear to me.

Julia! Julia!

19. Herrick, from the country
We are content here easing ourselves into old ways thinking but little of other days.

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20. Dirty Work
Don't go on the factory floor, son. I used to tell my lad, and showed him my hands, engrained over years with this map. At least I knew that two hours after I stoop to fold overall legs in my bike clips, he sets out in his blazer. Housing Department, nice clean job. I told my pals over dominoes.

Some folk think I have an easy ticket: no oily nails, no creaking in my ears. What can they know of struggles to implement progress in the face of opposition? Now, take that old codger at Coy Cottage horrified to learn he shares with me the spoils scooped from his flying-pail my department plans to replace his run-down premises with a carpet. So much neater, and what does he know with a couple of acres? But he turned down that compact, third-floor flat we offered, fitted units, everything. I warned him not to violate the regulations referring to domestic livestock. Those gears will have to go, I assured him faithfully. But, rearing his unkempt head, he said a very blunt recommendation: something about my hook. And a bit lost for an answer, I stared at my hands, and fancied I could detect an etching of grime progressing, unopposed

21. St Kilda
The map the dominic had tacked up On the schoolroom wall didn't even show St Kilda, but then only a foreigner Would have needed one to find his way past Mull And Skye, out through the Sound of Harris, then on

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22. Flatlanders
They're all do-it-yourselfers. If it moves, nail it. If it cracks slap Polyfilla in it before teatime or the Devil will sail through sure as daylight

A garage crammed with clamps oil heaters, gears, glue and worn chisels in rows waiting for resurrection. Next door's lawn clipped to a tolerance of plus or minus three millimetres

They say never laugh when the wind's in the East never look a gift horse in the mouth never trust a man whose eyebrows meet never call a kettle black

They've seen the last of the gods bounded from the hills by pipes, pumps, pylons, reservoirs switching stations and TV masts; heard the stream at the bottom of the wood panelling, reduced to skin and bone and a glimmer of fox-fur

The women sit solid each evening staring the sky down, thinking how many summers since dusk grew big with the wild vermillion within them?

The men take the Telegraph, lie back the roses carefully with green twine, commiserate at street-ends, never say die, know what's good for them

23. Going up the Line: Flanders
Mme Verkleede, mother of four tall sons, hangs out washing on a fine drying day, shirt after shirt, facing the same way, off to their anchored dance.

One, swollen with bravado, advances towards the sky; another writes, reluctant to yield to the sun's shifty blandishments. This tattered one, a plaything for the cat, draggles its limp sleeve along the grass. That one hangs, crucified, while its striped brother, made of different stuff, clowns in frantic acrobatics. Another catches its hem on rose-thorns, resists the summons of the wind that makes its neighbours chatter.

Here, from beneath our feet - were there an instrument patient enough to tease the messages along the threads - we could exhume the uniforms, scrape off the mud, tip out the bones, reconstitute the men who hung on them. The biography of one nineteen-year old would stretch for miles, telling how he shivered that July, played cards, wrote half-truths home, clutched a frail tulipman inside his tunic, faint with heart-beats louder than the shells.

Mme Verkleede, hearing a cracked handbell the rag and bone man's invitation, reflects, begins to gather in and fold her wind-thrashed harvest. When the evening breeze blows from the south-west she can hear the bugle sound the last post from Ypres.

24. Churches
Their towers make a studwork you spy down the long aisles of motorways - focal

of villages lost in foliage. . . . A spire's pinpoint, miles out, promises a celestial city. . . .

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Senescent grey lends them dignity, old fossils that cling to a stone-age past,

gesture at survival, aspire to the heavens above About them, cluttered

monuments to contingency - higgledy-piggledy headstones, monolithic table-tombs.

Lost in a sheep-flecked country where the lines lie granny knots.

signposts point five ways, that pencil-point the sky licks may lead you out of a maze

Their yards are little heavens where cloistering yews inspire timely meditations

on the ground of the living and the dead . . . Greyfriar pigeons pooh-pooh it all from the lead . . .

confetti like apple blossom trails through the lych-gate to a marriage bed

In the porch, latches clunk on doors into the dark You take off your hat,

genuefied from habit, take a pew . . . genuflect Pentecostal light fork tongues through high windows . . .

scan a bingo card of hymn numbers . . . curse as knees knock carved woodwork. . . .

Soles clatter as you exit, as though from the Cave, to daylight slanted with vision.

a sun-dappled Garden of Eden where a thrush allelulias, bees matter prayers . . .

children's' trebles bob the air to an ice-cream van's quodlibets sunshine tsuris

25. Greetings from Düsseldorf
A cobble yard: an impatient bronze coil fenced in by spears: a livid spire or two: I've learned to pick these charming fragments out from the money-boxes, thick in every crater, and make up a camera-film, a street in filter, that saw the Emperor once, or a burrying Jew.

Admiring a sleek old fraulein's haute couture (if you must be old, be tall, I always say) over a mineral-water in Königsallee. I woo the Big Names like an editor: Schumann stumbles outside the head office of Mannesmann (the looped double-M's a gas-blue cross-stitch sewn among the stars) and weeps into the Rhein Park's humdrum grass for a plunge of shadow, a deep sea to die in: Heine on Bolkerstrasse slowly climbs to his mattress-grave above the Schwincken Grill, praising God he's lost his sense of smell: - but these are my ghosts, not the burgomeister's. The roads are young, the young wear pink or white with their tans. Midnight's rush-hour, every door a jumping rainbow. You, in love, post-war, would rate this city of stylish appetite.

26. The Black Dog
Sometimes I open the door to the black dog. Let him slide in with a sideways look. Neither timorous nor aggressive. I like him to sit still when he comes, not to dig up the bones that have begun to smell in the garden, nor to scratch the point inside, but to lie small. Before the cold hearth with an occasional stretch. And fanged yawn.

He does not sleep, of course, just lies Scenting everywhere with his blackness. full Of undreamt dreams: red meats that fall into his jaws - but I have nothing to lose in a modern house with the food Pre-packed and frozen away behind air-tight doors. Only, it would be best to confide My hand to his tongue in the touch that endears. Engendering desires.

Sometimes I shut him out and he stands Motionless under trees, staring through the wall. I am aware of that shape in the well Of shade, drawing me to where the dark extends Without limit in his eye. I shall go to him, one day, where brittle leaves Lie, knowing that inevitably he Will walk away, that swallower of lives, Mine limp in his mouth.

27. The Lions
I wonder who it was, Who was it, gave me lions to look after? I don't know what they eat. They frighten me. They sit in their cages and yawn. They are peaceful now

They do not know what I am really like.

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32. Heliopolis

Heaps of rubbish, trellises for summer grapes,
Pomegranate flowers shiny as lipstick,
The usual enlightened self-interest
Of cats seated equally from one another,
The turquoise flash of a tram's connecting rods,
A girl so stone-like in her thought she fails
To wipe away a muscara of small flies
And from the telephone your infuriating
Languorous denial -
'Maybe I cannot
Come to you today';
I wait and wait.

Yesterday I uncovered you and lifted hair
In whose blackness shone lights of muvee and blue
To touch the soft ivory of breasts and shoulders
While someone rang the doorbell over and over.

Afterwards you washed yourself so your brothers
Would not detect any taint of me, made-up,
(Your lips were red as pomegranate flowers -
'You must not kiss me now!')

disappeared
As the colours shrivelled and the sunset
Call to prayer ground out its syllables,
You left me to the night oxygen of plants,
The territorial disputes of cats,
The groan of iron wheels on sunken rails
And from the rooms beneath me the weeping
Of someone with hurts no one came to cure.

33. The Wooden-heads

I am learning nothing at incredible speed,
Wetwring in ink: a blotted copy-book,
My nibs and fingers crossed unhelpfully,
Crumbled from the soft pages of a library-book,
The wooden-heads are punishing my day-dreams,
Zombie-skittles, they run rings around you;
The circle closed, the victim vanishes.
Having cleared London, they will start on

Cambridge.
Ropes and wall-bars offer no escape-routes;
Matched at bantam-weight, I bob and weave,
My gloved hands pummelling the air.
They have caught Hodges; by the cycle-racks
I saw him, red-faced, simple, yellow-haired:
Now empty, strangled in his father's toolshed.
The foul-mouthed kapos of the middle-school
Are doing a roaring trade in small extinctions,
Trawling a dragnet for us small-fry.
The game is gas-chambers. Into the labs with you,
Heads pressed hard against the bunsen-burners
Whispering you to sleep. We lurk in crevices,
Closed by dark wood, secrets, grey flannel,
A master with one eye like a scorched Cyclops,
And feel our little strategies go down,
Slipping through all the circles of the underworld.
The gowns and blazers form their broken ring;
There is a gap still I can wriggle through
If I can only purge away my scraps
Of dog-Latin, wrong notes, false equations.
Best to go to ground in the reeking bogs:
Unbolted stalls, chads, pig-troughs of urine.
The wooden-heads are out looking for minds to bend,
My satchel of trash blocked up in their beast-world.
I see Hodges swinging behind a door,
His childhood flushed away, his bright blue eyes
Still laughing at me over his knotted throat.

34. Fatigues

1. Scouting locations for an underworld thriller
with state-of-the-nation ambitions,
he gets mugged in a docklands back alley.

Escorting the producer's daughter
to a matinee performance of *Macbeth* in modern dress,
his second act is to fall asleep.

2. In his dream he's swimming the Channel:
his legs are tiring, the water dragging down,
when a luminous shark he's known since childhood
sidles leisurely into focus . . .

Meanwhile, in spitting
rain in a striped marquee the reception party
is about to begin: schoolgirl gymnasts
feel butterflies flutter and the town band
is tuning up. And somewhere in Dorset
a visitor from the New World in a lightweight mac
throws her last small change
into the pool - the same woman
he'd watched circling the black throats three times
before she vanished off the face of the earth.

3. Slumped in a doorway, he wakes
to find his wallet, watch and Leica gone.
Almost everything can be replaced
except the photographs of his parents
and the one he had taken
of him in the Bouzzy Rouge with a famous
comedian
looking older and richer than as seen on TV.

35. Sea-shore

A vigorous and persuasive swimmer,
Assured in his experience of the tides,
Allows the picnickers below the cliff
Their fear of wasps and sunstroke.

Width of the cove
The sea reflects the glittering sky
Predictably. Who cares
If the swimmer can't be seen?

Far out, he surfaces, his head
As natural as a sea-bird or a rock.
He stares back at the beach, treading water,
Unfocused, in a wilderness of light.

At last he sees the picnickers, his friends,
Remote from his scrutiny, their gestures
A tiny, colourful, assertive pattern
Against the deserted beach and towering cliff.

He imagines them returning in the evening
To fill the holiday house above the bay,
Domesticating, with familiar chatter,
The menace of its mid-day emptiness.

'The sun glids the water round the swimmer.
Its indifference hurts his eyes. Without thought,
He turns on his side and glides
Deeper and deeper into the shadowed silence.

The picnickers continue their routine
Of careless eating, talking, half-read books,
Deliberately allow the burning heat
To anaesthetize their senses, unaware

They now have cause for concern.

36. The Estuary

It's not a short cut but a diversion
Sometimes to favour the estuary's
half mile and low tide
smell of primeval slaughters

basted over and over
to a succulence that might swallow
a man down. Chased by the tail
and taken at the head, for

fifteen minutes the path follows
the edge where the world is seen
quietly changing its mind;
going nowhere but to return

with always, at recognition's
limit, the maybe of a stray
bird taken by a bewildering storm
out of the ordinary.

In this republic of the occasional
and neglected, a green honeycomb
of bedsprings and a supermarket trolley
caparisoned with wrack and slime

are allowed their singular
evolutions. And in the half light, birds
of passage, their home the wandering
climate of a season, probe the silky mud.

Dunlin, hunched and brisk as nits,
ruffle the shallows from the Blue
Lagoon Lido to the breakers yard
where a frigate's slow erasure

has begun, having made it
neither as a showpiece
nor to the bottom but run aground
on the sands of this gentler demise;

to be lost forever in the dismantled mists
of its hull a new horizon marks
as the sea's forests
rise. The sky bluer and warmer by an hour,

the tide wound a few yards nearer
the bank and the birds take flight
to where land and sea
are still in doubt.

The cement plant, a collage
of corrugated metal sheets
rickety with shutters and struts
as an out of season funfair,

sends out a shudder of dust
like a striking clock
as the small boats are eased
upright, idle words on the water's closing page.

37. Pictograph in Dust

Our land has forgotten the taste of rain,
the sky hot, scorning us for years.
We wander, settle for a time,
build houses round ourselves,
cut the door out last.

White men came on roaring carts,
showed us by signs
a different kind of place
where water leaps out of the earth
and we could live soft always.

But this is where we grow.
We are dry people, deep-rooted as thorns,
baked like our cooking-pots.
The earth holds the shape of our heels;
our ancestors need our songs.

They pointed at the sky,
played frightened, waved their arms,
then shook their heads, went away.
The land threw dust
into the air behind them.

Three dawns. Sky flash. An extra sun,
a monstrous cloud, beautiful as rain-dreams,
blossoming. We lost ourselves in looking,
lost our skin, our hair.
Was this what they were pointing to?

And lately, a new sickness.
The strangeness of it made us weep
until the elders spoke.
'All death is one,
only the tracks we take to it are different.'

Could we scratch pictures, tell
the people who come after us, and after,
how the white men's spirits are terrible
to those who raise their eyes
above the thorns?

We are building our last houses
- as we have always built
but with no doors. We shall grow light,
crumble like earthenware,
become the land.

38. Pater et Filius

When I first met him, he was thirty-six.
I never knew the schoolboy fly-weight
The medical student, the courting captain
The youthful politician filled with indignant dignity;
Cannot remember him upon a horse
Who rode as hard as any man -
Master of harriers, harrier of masters.
The small deft hands that gloried in the sacrament of birth

I never saw deliver more than a rainbow trout.
I observed him only in some later roles:
The country doctor lifting his hat
To friendly faces with half-remembered names
Whose family trees he would relate, inaccurately;
The father of six, choosing a pew in church
Then turning his back upon the altar
To let his family take their seats

Each genuflecting at his feet
With unintended blasphemy;
The yachtsman, purple with unstified rage
At a jammed halliard or clumsy crew;
The golfer, gulping pills to dull the pain
Till he had won his wager on the eighteenth green -
As quick to buy the first round
As he was to take the last shilling.

Tonight I watch this new performance, the unhealed
physician
Impatient patient, waiting for the morning.
Beside the bed, your drawing of the heart they will
explore.

Anaesthetist and priest have been and gone
And left behind their separate reassurance.
Futile to say how good the chances seem
When one is talking to the stakes.
Better to make you chuckle at denying the Revenue

Anything save buttons, if things go wrong.
Better to describe precocious grandchildren
While you identify in each son, wife, self
Until sleep finds you.
(Tomorrow you will go to sleep surrounded and alone
To have breast-bone split open with a chisel.)
Looking at your shaven face I wonder:
If priest and doctor are both wrong

And you never wake from the dark dreams of hloothane
Is it or was it enough that we live on
To gallop or to put
To diagnose or cut
To bellow at the wind?
Is it for your sake or for mine
That I do not put the question
But wait my turn to know?

39. The Letter Writer

(Illustration in a textbook)

Most of the messages were plain, pre-written.
'How are you? I'm fine, doing nothing but
digging trenches. Hope to return in
time for the picking. Don't worry, don't cry, as
if you can, send kuchen.'

Those composed specially also were in keeping.
'The baby? Mother? Our cows? Are they
getting fatter? Don't forget what I hid in
the cellar. Give nothing away unless it's paid for,
remember when it rains cover up that wagon.'

A skeletal man who could peer over windows, he
crouched at his stack of post-cards, pens, and pad,
bosomed a box of multi-coloured stamps with
fingers stained indelibly, sat there ready like
some teacher waiting for their homework

responding to men who
rarely wavered from forms mentioned.
He conspired with a nod and a smile, and
pocketed a groschen as they shuffled away...
but for
one tall corporal who asked for the largest size
paper.

'This field furrowed out reminds me of
springtime, except these trenches sink deeper.
The morning dew is like your forehead when I
wipe it to
kiss you. The yielding earth brings back
your body when I ask you to . . .

At the edge of our area there's a farm,
two mornings now I notice their missy
pulling udders on a scrawny cow.
How round and blossomed you were at
Michaelmas, the necklace I tied on you glistered

Hundreds of birds all about us
chirping, flitting, chasing. . .
occasionally a bullet whistles by
brings all singing to a halt.
I'll be back before snow blows in again.

In the meantime,
keep dreaming of me.'

40. The Embrace - a Sketch from the Forbidden Library

Who are these two in ungainly pose
on the great Victorian bed
his legs thrust out
she kneeling awkwardly
hidden from us as if seeing
the pink-skinned posturing
might bring the fleshy nirvana
one step nearer?

Not a patch on what we have now
the videos the Danish photos
of throesomes dark-veined erections
against backdrops of flock wallpaper
and prints of the green woman.

Hindu sculptures carry it off
ethereal masks closed eyes
looking in to what we experience
in the dark as we cling to each
other desperate castaways using
an identikit image of love
to exchange infinite loss
for ephemeral bliss.

41. After Hiroshima

This is our last day at school
And this, the final playtime.
It is now just a question of waiting
For someone to ring the bell.

The young ones still play in the old way
At jumping backs or hiding
Like animals, literally kidding.
Making a world in a day.

But we, being older, shift
And shuffle in doorways, having
Loaded our books, knowing
There is nothing left

That needs to be known.
There are no songs to sing.
We're through with imagining.
What's done is done.

This is our last day at school.
Along with the world, we are waiting:
Just biding in time
Till the desperate farewells.

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42. Couples

Like tulips touching in a jug; they sway and sag
Like univolar twins, still dumb,
In amniotic fluid; then pant like lungs.
Steamship and its tug heave to, in seas of fog.
And then - like our original bishops
(Strolling on the water) - speak with tongues.
Like battleships. . . . Like frigates, grapple.

And, as the flames indulge in levitation,
Roast in paradise. A million sperm set sail.
The fleet is drowned. On the surface
A few blis of charred wreckage float:
His shirt and socks, her knickers, strew the bed,
Underneath her mother's fur coat.
(Maternal canopy) Shore of the sea's curve.
The unimaginable pre-historic cave. . . .
Back to earth, they pick the usual bones.
Quarrels flower. Each one flings their stones.

43. Counterfoils

The papers of the late Elizabeth Trotwood -
Who kept carbons as well as cheque-stubs -
Show that in the last months of her life
She complained to the Department of the Environment
About the raw noise of a demolition,
And to the Editor of the "Radio Times"
Because he reproduced paintings by dead artists
With no attributions. She wrote to the BBC
Begging for The Archers signature tune
To be toned down, and sent three letters
To various authorities about plans
To commercialize Ashton Court. Nearer home,
She pointed out to the manager of the neighbouring hotel
That round his dustbins there was unhygienic mess.
And she informed her local Residents' Association
That she would not support them while they were
Undemocratic and irregular. She asked
Why British Telecom no longer put directories
In telephone kiosks . . .

But in the same period
She supported with small donations Imperial
Cancer Research, the Marie Curie Foundation,
Oxfam, Shelter, the Deaf-Blind, Ethiopia,
The Nuclear Freeze, and a special appeal
For the preservation of Wavering Down
in Wiltshire.

Was all this anything more
Than the splashing about of a sparrow
In a shallow dish, sending water-drops
in all directions? I think it showed
Impatient incredulity that things and people -
Like donkey boys - would not behave or keep her rules:
They must be told and in some cases helped.
(Cancer cells could not be allowed unchecked rampage.)
But perhaps it was a sending out of signals -
Her own appeals, asking for some response,
A recognition of her presence in the world,
While she was there, alive and wide awake.

44. Normandy

Hidden footprints tread orchards
Hung with white rags of blossom.
Jackboots kissed this earth
With their black print;
Cattle graze over the memory,
Hawthorn flowers are lazily
Shaken over old heel-wounds.

In the village there are monuments
To the soldiers of both wars.
A grey stone remembers the others,
The martyrs who died against trees,
Gagged with torn sheets, their eyes
Petals closed by Mausers as spring
Made cider through the trees' sap.

Farms lie empty from reprisals:
Their red clay tiles tilt,
Drunk with light.
A track heads nowhere through grass rank
With buttercups, then finds a clutch
Of half-crazy hens pecking for grit.

Wood pigeons glide in and out of
The sanctuaries of trees, they roost
With the murmur of leaves a green
Liquid in their throats;
Already the high meadow is raked
For its last wisps of hay.

Soon they will clean the cider press,
Scraping last year's pips from crevices,
Scolding the bleached oak as they would
A pig grown fat on windfalls.
The great screw glides up and down
The oiled shaft, its turning dizzy
With downward force, crushing the wild
Secret juice from history.

45. The Novelist

Having lovers was not
what she expected.
It made for a lot
of planning
and a great deal
of anguish.

They never got
to the essence of her,
and left her to rot
after a few years
of getting written up
unkindly.

The cats wore not
a great help either,
or the pot
under the bed,
and cigarette smoke
in her hair.

Having her was not
what they expected.
It made for a lot
of effort
and not enough
of the other.

They were off like a shot
as soon as she started
ignoring the plot
and leaving out
their tender sensitive
natures.

46. 85th and Madison

On 85th and Madison
a plastic whale
rides the blue awning
of a seafood restaurant.
It marked home
for my first five years.

One day my nurse
lost me in Central Park.
My mother sped home
from work while my father,
at the office, fretted
as the telephones rang
and the typewriters clacked.
The Authorities were alerted:
somewhere I was bobbing
lost in the crowds,
perhaps a Pip drowning
in NY's multitudinous sea.

But I wasn't overcome
by the unwarp world
of drugpushers, kite flyers
and couples necking in the grass.
I certainly wasn't lost.
I was a baby faced Ahab
with my weather eye open for Moby Dick.

I sped past the Met's steps
keeling to my right
and tacked across a wide stretch
of dark smooth sea
(awash with fast moving
honking yellow buoys)
when a bus, bigger than a clipper ship,
almost blew me over in its wake.

Then I stopped for a friendly gami
(of mocha chocolate chip)
with the local ice cream man.

In the afternoon
the doorman, who had given me
two silver sixshooters for Christmas,
spotted me on the street.
I was following two women
in white: off duty nurses from St Vincents.

Later that night, after the hugs
and reproaches, my parents laughed
and said I had been clever,
but mistaken. Those were hospital nurses
who help sick people, not home nurses
who help working mothers:
not all women in white
lead you home.

47. Fritz Baedeker talks in his sleep during the preparation of his Handbook on Scandinavia, Leipzig 1902

Travellers addicted to fashionable resorts this year, 1902,
To luxurious hotels brimming with top-hats,
Will not find Norway entirely up their street;
While lovers of nature can, from a window-seat,
Discover enthusiastic admiration, earnest desire to tour behind its snowy curtain.
Things not absolutely essential should be left alone.

(Adequate cognac may be bought in the larger towns, in case you feel alone.)
A smallish clothes-brush; top-hats,
Too - and (for your walking-excursions) corkscrew, field-glass, game-pouch (this is 1902) -
Will be desirable, if you crave the recherché restaurant's exclusive corner-seat.
As to garments, two strong (but light) tweed suits for use in the street,
A change of underclothing (warm: best if it envelops you like a curtain),

Light shoes for steambath and for carole. And a curtain
Of robust, water-proofed material - a wrapper for top-hats,
For coats and rugs (de rigueur in the street).
And protection for the knees in wet weather when you feel wretchedly alone.
(Umbrellas indispensable, unless you never stir from seat.
Visitors to Lapland: carry veils, though this is 1902

And Norway not Morocco, in deference to the gnats.) It is 1902
And, for rougher mountain-tours, especially if you find yourselves alone,
Gentlemen may dress like goats in a sort of efficacious, shaggy curtain;
Eat plentifully, also, of their dark and vigorous cheese piled high on tables like top-hats.
Ladies will require, if not strolling in the cordial street,
Gaiters or stout leggings. When you lie down, or seat

Yourselves for sleep, safety-pins cannot come amiss: a Norwegian bed is not much longer than a sent,
But scanty sheets may part company from blankets, shrink to a wisp; or the wind may necessitate your anchoring the curtain.
Add: blue spectacles, a compass; glycerine, court-plaster, urtica, carbolic-soap - don't forget top-hats;
Buttons and sewing-equipment for the ladies' maids when your wives forsake the street
The worse for wear; oil (to, as it were, anoint the gnats: these can be worse than husbands when wives desire to be alone.
German men are brutes - gentlemen, forgive me; my mind is rambling: it is late in 1902

And I am no longer so keen at appraising street or site. I preferred to live alone -
With my sisters sewing at their window-seat, and Berthe, than whom nobody is more skillful at polishing top-hats
Or drawing the convenient curtain; I couldn't handle the indelicacies of wedlock, even now, in 1902.) -

Finally, you will need some candles and a strong alpenstock. Gute Nacht.

Handwritten note in the right margin: "The light can be so beautiful when lying out French meals in grand hotels. Bright teeth, gleaming wine glasses, Turkish coffee willing servants arrange on a fine laundried table cloth. Those days are gone. Those days are gone for me. I say things twice in my head, silently."

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50. Advice to Candidates

All questions will appear to require an answer of you. If you cannot find a solution, go on to the next.

Candidates are advised that questions they leave may have changed or altogether disappeared by the time they return to them.

Similarly, candidates should not be surprised to find that subsequent questions change according to the answers given in an earlier section.

In any case candidates who have time to check over their answers are warned that for unforeseen reasons it may no longer prove possible to change what they have put.

Some questions are better ignored than attempted. Candidates are especially urged to bear this in mind in the case of those questions which seem, at first, the most inviting.

Whether or not to show their working is a decision that rests entirely with the candidate. They are warned, however, that very often displaying their thinking proves later to have done nothing more than highlight embarrassing errors.

Time allowed for the examination varies from one candidate to another and does depend to an extent (impossible to determine) on what answers the candidate gives.

Candidates may wish to bear in mind that it is by no means certain that their answers will ever be marked, or, if they are marked, what the examiners will be looking for. Nor is it by any means clear that cheating (in whatever form) is not one of the more successful strategies.

You are now fully in the picture. Do your best.

* This plural form and its cognates are adopted in all the Board's rubrics for use as a non-sexist singular pronoun.

51. Statement

It happened like this. I shall never forget. Da was drunk again, came in from the yard with his clenched face like a big fist, leaving the back door open . . . that low moon, full and dangerous, at the end of the close. *Jesus Christ*, he said, *I'd be better dead*, picked up the old clock from the mantelpiece and lunged it on the fire.

It burned till morning came. He kept her up all night, shouting the bad bits over again when she put her head in her hands and wept. Her apron was a map of Ireland. He jabbed his finger to the North, bruising her breast, yelled *There! There!* God's truth, she tried to kiss him, though Frank's near 21 and that was the last time.

Then she starts . . . *In the warfare against the devil, the world, and the flesh, on whom must we depend?* . . .

and he's ripped the floorboard up. No chance. Her face was at the window when they got him, watching him dance for the Queen's men, sweating blood doing it. I came running down, said *Mammy*, *Mammy*, and she turned with her arms like the crucifix.

52. Final Warning

Factually your father recalled being benten Black & blue by three patriotic Englishmen. Fighting the evil that was Irish neutrality. One black-out night in Birmingham. Then to dispel this memory he gave thanks To war for the surfers of unattached women; Telling story after tell-tale story. Till the tale of his return to his dying father. He unwittingly revealed how he must have grieved In boasting of his vigil by his father's death-bed. Then as if to warn you, soon himself to be dead, He reiterated: "When someone dies, you must continue".

You've learned nothing of consequence since he has gone. Except the terrible reality that you can actually go on.

53. Miners' Wedding

Most families try to make it right By an odd code imagined laid Down in mosaic of a churchyard Long forgotten and grown in weed.

Only bride's father and best man speak. Brown shoes are not worn. The bride is unseen. A mail-order purchase under plain cover, Until the altar-steps, by him who swayed

Canned last night in a gang down the local. Though clothes and presents seem plastic, Words and looks gleam solid gold, As the beaten-down coal-striker Gives his pale tough daughter away to the world.

54. Hanuabada, the Village on the Water

The Hanuabadans, a hated merchant people, Were driven south by Papua's warrior tribes, But clinging to an arid strip of coast, They built their shanty dwellings onto stilts,

Protruding from the sea like withered limbs. These houses imitate Colonial style, To mock the Europeans' landlocked sloth, Low slanted roofs, verandahs for the shade,

But built from junk, salvaged, stolen, Hauled by muscle, by rusty truck, floated By dusk, by spivvory, offcuts of corrugated Iron and masonry and rough sawn planks.

Sun warped lengths of three by two limbo Timber, once abandoned on dumps and woodpiles In the shoreline sprawl of Port Moresby. I was in Hanuabada once, late in the night,

With Frank Sailer, Latvian Jack and three Mixed race girls, lured to a 'pony'. Naiveté oozing from the pores of our sweating Paws, holding shoulder-borne tribute,

(Cartons of South Pacific lager), And with visions of some writhing orgy Among black nipples and bottle tops, We stumbled along the spindly walkways.

Inside, a group of Hanuabadan youths Were propped against a peg board wall. Two had guitars. In surly thanks for beer They strummed, of all things, 'Kansas City Come I come'.

The girls piled in a giggling huddle on the rush Mat floor, revealing shining thighs beneath Flower patterned frocks. We cast watering eyes Into the smoke filled gloom, heavy with body musk

And smell of rice and canned mackerel pike. Listlessly we mouthed a song we did not know. A guitarless youth jumped like a frog and held A kitchen knife at the throat of Latvian Jack

Because he would not sing. Later I remember Our leadbelly return, the rattle of the boards, The thud of the inky shallows on the piles Of Hanuabada, the village on the water.

55. Halley's Comet

Having dutifully driven home my dinner guest I return through the slushy darkness To the stewed intimacy of my Tufnell Park flat.

It is just as I left it: An unappetizing still-life of Used plates, cups, cutlery and glasses; Two empty wine bottles; A sleeveless stew of Mince, Monk, Coltrane; A disarray of cushions . . . Everything just as I left it. But disembodied and heavy with a sense of absence, The way that footmarks are.

It is almost midnight. I start to clear away all vestiges Of the evening's exploits And prepare for tomorrow. It's time to tidy up. Put out the milk bottles, And let in the cat.

On the doorstep, In an impromptu gesture of defiance At God knows who or what, I clasp the milk bottles hard for a moment Before setting them down. They feel cool and adamant in my grip And important like Molotov cocktails. I stand in the open doorway Holding the night in a penetrating stare, As though Halley's Comet itself were its object, Not next door's mangy one-eyed cat.

56. Surrey Garden

I can hear racquet and ball, scuffling tennis shoes, the call of the umpire, drone of bee, wind through acacia tree; crockery placed on a tray for tea on the lawn where a dog breathes deep, dreaming on shaded grass.

I can hear you call as I shift in my chair, knowing you will never be there again.

And, rather than have the pain of seeing a deserted garden, I pretend to doze thinking I can hear racquet and ball, drone of bee, the only reality the soft wool touch of your scarf left hanging in the hall.

57. Our Brood

The flower pots would rain small crumbs over the house, the phone would ring and we would race to hide, rubbing between our gritty palms a plot of six-year-olds' stubby, muddled thumbs that clawed the ground and pulled pants down to throw dirt in;

against the summer oven wind, in underwear damp with play, we levelled our naptime pillows, dashed our dreams, pulled our short, thin legs and rubbery arms across the manicured corners of the undersheet, kicking culprits to the floor;

and the cold seasons with the charitable trees we scurried by in knitted feet, rode new bicycles, overstuffing our cheeks brown in kisses, poured tea from the doll-house, scampered after strewn ribbons, paper, bows;

no classmate ever in our minds, only hassocks to throw and frogs, we would break our gums for the tooth-fairy, clutch and toss pineapples, blast marbles with our peanut toes, plant prune-pits, remembering the slow ring of the phone when the maid was gone,

dialling some phantom, asking for chocolate shake, and smearing dirt in our mouths.

58. Mysteries

They called her The Pink Lady: She was closing on forty; Her head was crammed with doxies And her life packed in boxes. All she had owned was painted Or Dyed. She'd invented A pink religion, only To find it no less lonely. How fierce her search for meaning, Surrendered on that morning: A final bag and suitcase Were ranked beside the fireplace. Everything there was tidy When we came for her. Did she Choose that spot, of many, Between the lounge and privy? Why did she wash up? Why pack? Was it some Egyptian trick? Did she embark happily From her basement in Hornsey? The pills give that the lie: The doctors' notes; poetry; The savage shapes in corners Of filed and guarded papers. However rich the symbols, She leaves no easy morals. Her head cocked in suspension Like an unfinished question.

59. Home Front

That winter of our Island Fortress, the docks blacked-out and sirens wailing, the house closed its brittle silence around her. Rain drummed the windows behind her children's dream. Over the months she saved from her widow's pay and the hours of cleaning at the manse seven silver coins, one from the abdication year with the head of the love-lost king.

Should the coastline be split by incoming shells, parachutes flower in the Vale and jackboots strut in King's Square, then she would lay her six children to sleep, sealing the windows and doors with newspapers and blankets. Seven shillings' worth of gas would deliver them out of occupation.

For months she has dreamed of his lost freighter, torpedoed six days out of New York, men overboard, gagging on salt and diesel. How the ship reared and plunged like a whale, her wash sweeping cold hands from Tolson. As he sank into the anonymous dark the final waves from her minting coins from the constant moon.

Tonight the City of London burns with St Paul's untouched at the very centre. At the edge of night the Welsh ports sound no alarms. She opens the curtains to a moon-bright sky, counts out the coins from the tea-caddy and holds them cupped in her palms. *OMN. REX. Defender of the Faith. Emperor of India.* The seven polished shillings sing in her hands.

60. Beeches in July

as if the sun had poured itself through yet another glass, and forgot to say when

as if time had suddenly clicked that it was no longer needed, and clocked off for good

as if space had gone off to have a ball and couldn't find its way back in time

as if trees had been given carte blanche to say anything they pleased, and found themselves speechless

as if seeds had been taught the wrong algebra and were turning out acres of unusable angels

as if words had caught their own reflection in the silence, and turned pale as paper

as if music had discovered it didn't need sound and could play all its notes at once

as if the wind had been caught red-handed picking all love's locks, and fled the country in a panic

as if death had been given its cards on the spot for falling asleep on the job this single second

61. Greta Garbo

A Japanese paparazzo photographer has been waiting outside her apartment for more than three years, but has now succeeded in getting a full-face picture.

Mostly you get the din of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Dins, traffic playing this thoroughway beside the East River. Mostly you get the sense of being alive, of being five time zones from home, from that family rooftop in Kawasaki, one block from the Sojiji Temple. I have captured kids playing put-ball at one two-fiftieth of a second at 14, leaves drifting to the ground on East 52nd at proportions of that speed, but Dame Fortune stays elusive. For thirty-eight months she has not bought zucchini. I find this remarkable. The Americans call a swede a rutabaga; I call this Swede the whole vocabulary, depending on my mood: witch, goddess, foil, mantrap. It is as if she never lived, and all I have done for a slice of my life is kick cans, light up another Lucky Strike, hope yet again to strike lucky; I suppose this is an odyssey in pursuit of elusiveness itself, a quest for the resurrection of beauty: Odysseus blew a decade on his errand. There's time yet. When the wind blows, desperate, down from Maine, and it's thirty below, I curse and stamp and spend all day in the diner, wiping condensation from the pane, focusing. He brings me soup, and tuts, scratching his head. "I thought Polacks were the limit, but you're something else." Life has become a philosophical acceptance of loss; a conflation of zeph and Zen. Something stirs, but it is only the janitor humping garbage onto the sidewalk for the next collection. She made a movie called 'Joyless Street' in 1925; the year my mother was born. High in the hills near Kawakami where the snowflakes are huge, and the air silent.

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62. The Preacher's Wife

All night, the tent like a huge bird Over us, rocked to sleep in the caravan By the wind. In the flapping canvas: His voice when I first heard it And declared my witness, Walking an aisle between shining faces Like a bride who has dressed In the congregation.

We have pitched on a meadow By the inner bay, Its thin, blue, grassland matted with weed, And wake to the flooding Of mudflats and saltmarsh: Each day baptized In the levelling water. As I was, beneath Bubbles breaching in a cloud of light And my husband's face.

Come evening we walk the promenade. He, stiff-legged and awkward As the long-legged birds That ledger sit where the land washes out

And I beside him To play the harmonium among These small farmers, their wives And children. And he will preach: His arm moving Like a blacksmith forging tongues of iron To bind the soft palates of horses' feet.

63. On a Picture of my Grandmother as Siebel

I wear her gift, the wedding ring she wore. Given, woman to woman, before the day. She smiled; she didn't need it any more. Slowly the engraving rubs away.

A mezzalme demand for trouser parts Until the Great War shattered her career. She turned her mind from stage to domestic arts And married; married twice in the same year.

Too late to ask her how that love began. The poetry: To My Girl, 1915. I know he took her from another man. It's seventy years ago. What did it mean?

Old age, like youth, is wasted on the young. Though chance preserves in me her voice and hair, Too late to ask what ways she walked among - What was it like for her to love then, there?

How did it feel to make the law a mug, Annul her error, brand herself a whore? She stands, defies society with a shrug: She is as fine a woman as before.

As Marguerite's companion, young Siebel, Above her rights she sports a hint of gullie; Knowing, perhaps, her betters bound for hell, She wears, in her picture, an archaic smile.

64. The Unsent Letter of the Gasterbeiter

The autobahns look like runways The sleek BMWs have been taking off To warmer weather down south. Yesterday there was snow - the sky filled with a million white petals. Remember the police station at Bodrum? The calendar on the wall blossomed with golden leaves, flowed with the Rhine . . . The policeman bellowed with laughter when I asked whether it was Paradise.

We have now got a new foreman. His belly hangs over his belt, he goes red when he shouts and has a glass eye, but he is not too hard on us. The 'economic miracle' doesn't extend to my accommodation - I'm woken up by the daily clearing of throats in the basin, but your photograph shines out of the darkness, a woman's tender look in the Fatherland. I have shaved off my moustache - you wouldn't recognize me now, and silver hairs have crept into my temples. The women wear bright colours, have yellow hair and no eyebrows; they look at us with the contempt and animal fear of prison warders. How are the boys? Tell them I saw Hamburg play against Eintracht Frankfurt and I will try and send a football magazine soon. There's talk of work at Essen - a pipeline. Some have already gone there. I will let you know what happens. It is very cold now. I wear my sheepskin but it is only the janitor humping garbage onto the sidewalk for the next collection. She made a movie called 'Joyless Street' in 1925; the year my mother was born. High in the hills near Kawakami where the snowflakes are huge, and the air silent.

I will let you know what happens. It is very cold now. I wear my sheepskin but it is only the janitor humping garbage onto the sidewalk for the next collection. She made a movie called 'Joyless Street' in 1925; the year my mother was born. High in the hills near Kawakami where the snowflakes are huge, and the air silent.

65. A Friendship

He made restless forays into the edge of our marriage. One Christmas Eve he came late, his dark hair crackling with frost, and ate his carnation buttonhole to amuse the baby.

When I had the second child, he came to the foot of my bed at dusk, bringing pineapples and champagne, whispering 'Are you awake?' - singing a snatch of opera. The Nurse tapped him on the shoulder.

At the end, we took turns at his bedside. I curled up in the chair; listened to each breath postponing itself indefinitely. He opened his eyes once, and I leaned forward: 'Is there anything you want?' 'Now she asks', he murmured.

66. A Request to my Cousin Stephen in Heptonstall

Growing up as high as the drystone wall down the rocky track to the valley bottom, crowding out brambles, unsettling the nettles, braver than willow-herb, braver than bracken,

what is this plant in this northern county, as potent as runaway poppies in Suffolk? Am I then alien in my own country, not knowing its name, not at home with its stalk -

red, ribbed, like rhubarb, but hollow, thinner, with leaf sets of three that fan out the stem and at each axil a flush of tender saw-toothed lance-shaped leaves, like blackthorn,

only these are edged red, matching the ring of polyps, these could be would-be leavers, rudimentary like a roebuck's budding antlers, auxiliaries held in reserve.

and the flowers, like vetch, extravagant, multiple, open-mouthed in a wild inaudible cry, modulating through pink to purple, coming into their own this late July,

hanging like helmets? Himalayan Balsam. Or, as it's known to your neighbours, the artillery plant from the explosion, just like lupins, of each hot seed pod. So you tell me.

The grapes of seeds, a thought down the wind, a burr in the white fur of a field of cottonheads or maybe blown to be bound in a coarse jute bale, bullock-borne, and stowed

away in the hold of an Indian under acres of sail, over long-winded seas to be lapped in the Pool, and whence by canal and cart to Colden Water's mill. A seed

of Himalayan balsam, the first footholder rising from the river, a path finder, a root-marcher, each year bolder, annually more hardy, familiar, kinder.

Above the no longer discharging cannon of the mill, this pink smoke rising. Welcome as primrose, extend me your pardon.

Send me this autumn a ripe pod of balsam.

67. Graffiti

He wrote on every surface he could find: doors, windows, walls, pavements, railings . . .

He employed every medium to hand: pencils, pens, crayons, chalk, paint-brushes, spray-cans . . .

And what did he write? Proper nouns, improper names, salutations and denunciations for someone or everyone or no one in a slanging mishmash of dialects.

When they caught up with him he was strapped and bawled at and bawled out, fined and confined and boiled.

Finally, all his inarticulacies were strung together to form one long sentence.

He was sent to a place surrounded by a white fence on which he was forbidden to write. So he pulled down the screen in his mind and wrote go home, go home, go home.

68. The Visitor from Home

We gather on armchairs settees rugs to hear how it is back there He is thin in a white shirt and pullover we sent wide-eyed with slicked down hair like a thirties striker he is a shipyard worker.

'A month's pay buys a pair of shoes' I look at his feet heavy brown lace-ups not worth a month's sweat 'Four children to feed' all those mouths all those months

Someone translates for Krepel the Czech Big Jan with the plate in his skull is weeping the tin of grossy lies closed we play no cards tonight.

Oh Mama bring the red-veined cakes laden the coffee from the bowl on the tall black stove.

Big Jan's only letter says 'The grass is brown the earth is cracked' He takes it from his cardigan every night reads it cries replaces it brown and cracking.

I run to him with vodka and coffee gherkins and seed cake.

Our visitor rolls a thin black cigarette lights it relights it it sticks to his lips which pull back as if it tastes bitter I see him with his musk and torch in firework stars balancing on a ship's side burning his hands with red-hot rivets for months of shoes.

69. A Slight Delay

A graveyard likes a sunny day. Especially in those corners where The stones' preponderance of grey Collects the monolithic air

And cockeyed headstones lend their weight To epitaphs as autumn lean Lengthways into the desolate Corruptions of South London green.

At Denmark Hill the sun came out And from the window of the train The light leapt like a tickled trout Resurfacing through months of rain.

And vases straightened, granitic shone. A damp gleam tracked a plastic hose, An angel boicked a marble urn. Its legs turned smoothly varicose.

And all the dead were filled with light And meaning as we trundled past Packed face to face and glad to get Our journey under way at last.

70. Roofrats

Roof rats also nest in palms. When the coconuts are ready, to the annoyance of the owner who has sat in his apartment below with the TV and a crate of Milwaukee all these months, the rats drill into the shaggy heads to suck the thin milk. Over the husks they twine, sucking. They spread eagle their pink hands.

For other food or for the moonlight they cruise below. They have over the downlands of silver gables filled in aluminium. They jump down by disordered hair, the wiry platts and hanks of fucus branches: bell pulls passing upper veranda to lower veranda, home of a white turret the boudoir of Mrs Carrasco, or the crazy cottage next door, its gate of hen wire. Its trapped car - This car is not abandoned its plastic pelican, its Milwaukee man.

And so to the windy pavement where the green coconuts blow down.

They hang, now and then, in the night. They roll in among the seamed brown ones piling the dry, mosses-filled gutters.

71. Hill-Fort

'What we cannot hold we destroy' - Robert Bruce, 1320

Enter the tore of trench and rampart, stand on the beaten sill of earth that rings round the spiralled hill. Under a lintel of low sun, thinning branches, step down, enter the spiral.

Broken by lightning, snapped in storm, half of a great tree rests its perfect perpendicular grey in the arms of a green neighbour; they stand there deliberate as dolmen. Walk through their door.

A sudden unlinging of air - the gust throws up old leaves like scaring birds: the birds wheel like ash, the leaves tick down in a turning circle.

Here, the remains of a need-fire - black tins, twists of paper, smoke-spoon on the faces of trees. The wind plays ash round the head of a cracked doll: tilts the latch of the lids, opens the eyes.

Pass on, past the fire, out of the ditch and into the centre, pass on up to the oak.

Wind darkens the grass again, tugs at the dead trees sleeved in ivy: the low branches becoming whips the high branches hands. Autumn mines the land to detonate the stray step, the patter of birds; each twig a trigger that will send a pheasant drilling up through air that smells of rust, a metal coil unwinding in the throat.

The pollard oak is smeared with creosote, its cropped head on fire with mistletoe like smoke; a red seal for every limb removed and for every scar a new spike in the crown. Wounds drive the roots deeper, out like spokes to the hill's rim. What we cannot hold we destroy, or attempt to destroy. But the horned god carries caution like a flag.

The wind finds a flute in the head of a wren. The year is swinging shut.

72. Alzheimer's Journey Home

1. Scuffed suitcase, the label torn, abandoned on an unnumbered platform: public address pounding time after time of trains impossible to catch, destinations far beyond reach; the timetable a grey smear of uncertain departures; hours in waiting-rooms, deserted or overcrowded.

A man in uniform shakes his head at a ticket for yesterday on a different line.

Corridors, carriages, empty and cold or packed with smoke and harsh accents: Pullman coaches on the next track glide forward frame by frame, this one slipping back.

The window, jammed, mutes the last message to a dark, distancing figure. Silent telegraph poles upstuck countlessly staking out the blank landscape. Lights falter. The tunnel waits.

2. The wrong keys for locked cupboards; wardrobes musty with the dried sweat of clothes no longer worn; mirror streaked and blotched, its silver spent, reflecting stained walls; drained, expressionless faces in over-exposed photographs; flowers decaying in sepia water.

Smell of gas, stale cooking; fingers smudged black on dead matches. Drug bagged curtains but the windows are shuttered outside.

Housebound, the day crumples on the unmade bed, its promises left in half-road books. Its fears hidden in the wallet under the mattress its secrets secure in an unwritten diary.

Cards laid for perpetual patience, but the puck is incomplete; letters delivered to the wrong address; an evening newspaper for a different town. The cellar light dims; the stairs are steep.

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73. The haunting at Epworth

Epworth Rectory was the childhood home of John Wesley. In December 1716 the house was possessed by a poltergeist; after many unsuccessful attempts at exorcism the spirit, nicknamed "Old Jeffery" by the little Wesley girl, left of its own accord.

Old Jeffery begins his night music.
The girls, sheathed in their brick skin,
giggle with terror. The boys are all gone
out to the world, "continually sinning",
their graces exotic and paid for.

Old Jeffery rummages pitchforks
up the back chimney. The girls
open the doors to troops of exorcists
who plod back over the Isle of Axholme
balked by the house. The scrimmage
of iron, shattering windows and brickwork
chipped away daily is birdsong
morning and evening, or sunlight
into their unannounced lives.

Old Jeffery tires of the house slowly.
He knocks the back of the conubial bed
where nineteen Wesleys, engendered in artlessness
swarm, little ghosts of themselves.
The girls learn to whistle his music.

The house bangs like a side-drum
as Old Jeffery goes out of it. Daughters
in white wrappers mount to the windows, sons
coming from school make notes – the witless
goes out towards Epworth and leaves nothing
but the bald house straining on tiptoe
after its ghost.

74. Games with my daughter

The first clear afternoon of Spring bursts
April's buds and bulbs in the park.
This year when I catch and take her weight
she powers the swing and arcs
from finger-stretch behind my head
to soaring feet-in-the-clouds.
Mothers to our left and right
shrink in their corridors of safe flight.

Our game's revealed the filling out,
the firmer, young woman's stare,
the promise Winter concealed beneath its coat.
Forward and up she splits the sky. Each
swing down and back she goes by to where
my tip-toed fingers' grasp can't reach.

75. At Mycenae

... but slew his son
And half the seed of Europe one by one.
The Parable of the Old Man and the Young
(Wilfred Owen)

Behind the lintel of the Lion Gate,
swallows have built their nest. A sweatstained,
overweight American squats in the shade
of ashlar ramparts, fanning himself
with a bush hat. "Hey, which pile of stones
is this?" A veteran's pension keeps him
in exile. Once, his moon stood arm in arm
with that eager, cropped Marine recruit
who is altogether someone else.

At Thanksgiving and every birthday,
he calls collect. His father never speaks.
"This is the country to screw up with your folks!"
Irony belies the self-disgust,
the emptiness. He lay in a bunker,
smoking a joint. The black sergeant
played Hendrix on his new Hitachi.
From six miles up the valley, NVA
blew their minds. Parts of his skull are wired
like a broken vase.

Two Mirages, burning Nato dollars,
lowly fly the ancient packroads of the plain.
Guides speak louder. . . . Die Totenmasken
aus ägyptisches Gold. . . . Agamenon
cannot sleep while glory and despair
divide his heart. . . . await sacrifice
so little, son enfant. . . . and does not know
that where they soldier to is his own death,
the palace in flames, all his children dead
or maimed or grieving. . . .

On the tourist bus, his compatriots
will avoid him. He smells of despair,
is a son, a brother missing in firefights
of littered flags. Survivor's guilt confounds.
How he longs to talk of Khe Sanh, how often
speaks of American Swallows
dip above him and under the gate.
He does not see them.

76. Postcard from Higher Bockhampton

Pilgrims on the A or the by-road
spot the pines of Egdon
a mile or so from the Mecca – green
gone blue, stragglers jagged,

hardly wild. Hardy's hamlet,
Higher Bockhampton,
basks in lush sunshine,
the house up a lane where a cat

stalks reverential tourists
toting guide books,
tucked into a contour beneath woods
where a wind fidgets.

Thatch on stone,
it's too idyllic for words . . .
A shop placard spells CLOSED . . .
and you feel it: tomb empty, bird flown,

wily, to the woods and weathered downs
where you twig,
as a battle-scarred thrush sings,
clouds track the path of the reddleman.

77. At Sawston Hall

This Catholic Tudor manor
Has been made into a language school.
Samplers embroidered with pieties yellowing
On the panelled walls, copies of portraits
Are all that's left of family history.

The new owner is Levantine,
Academic. He leans across at lunch
To whisper of circumcision,
'Not too early, not too late; inflicted
Between innocence and understanding.'

Outside students practise in the sun
Intent upon English for business,
Engineering, even literature.
They sit among members of a painting club;
Old ladies perched above bad sketches.

I inspect soft paper hardly touched.
Twelve strokes of maroon, severe as blades,
Have formed two water lily flowers.
I am impatient. 'It is Japanese.'
The artist looks at me, 'It wants more life.'

Beyond her is a pathway to the spring
Where once, coiffed daughters of the house
Giggled and dipped their handkerchiefs through
scum

To blot their skin with a holy tincture
Against spots. Now Buddhist and Muslim girls

Kneel to regard their own flawed complexions.
They pass the Bursar poised with secateurs
In undergrowth he's fustily labelled.
He mutters Latin names and observes
'These are the last of their kind in England.'

I think of the death of languages
As the watercolourist circles her blooms
With a blue wash meant for water.
Lily pads float upon this medium
And on them squat outlines of large green frogs.

78. Ghost

Of course it was some trick of moving shadows
that woman glimpsed upon our first night there
walking along the hallway, disappearing. . . .

Yet all our while in that slate-sided house
much fallen from the state it once had known,
her absence seemed accusing; on the shelves
old schoolbooks dated her, her inter choice of works
was spread for any visitor. I read
Grigson on herb gardens, snorted through
'Victorian girls' stories, and unearthed
a traveller in Cornwall 1881 –
'You take the Bodmin coach, best ride on top
to view this impressive landscape', he informed.
While in a locked glass-fronted case
Virgil and other most distinguished authors
sat snugly side by side in leather bindings
safe from the grubby child and thumbing doll.

Our last day there, gulls screaming in the air,
white irises in flower in the stone-walled garden,
I viewed the vacant windows of that house,
with shadowy fancies now dispersed.
We had not asked about her, leaving the proud

years past
to lie in their exclusion. 'Ghosts do not exist
except in tales and credulous minds', I said,
and my regret I owned irrational
that here in country noted for survival
she had not briefly haunted our intrusion,
fading through walls as if disdainful of us.

79. 16 May, 1961

My mother's last untroubled words
before the gas
are these: I will not have a son
named David.

The day of my appearance
is the day my father's due
on the voting block
of Lenox Hill Hospital. Their votes

accompany my party down the corridor:
the obstetrician's and the anaesthesiologist's.
One takes my father to one
side, and tells him: Burt, I can deliver
only one of you – yourself, your kid. Your
choice.

We're all of us enraptured
by my slow unravelling between her gasped-out
thighs, the obstetrician's 'Pink her up',

my father, me, the both of us, inducted fine
(though neither knew it at the time).

80. Clay pipes

Under my garden
men and women
smoke pipes.

This is why the sky
is blue, pipesmoke
seeping through soil.

No one has seen them.
In times of mist come
rumours of revelation.

Bits of chewed stem
surface occasionally,
reflex we find

We cannot decipher.
Smoke traces, burning
bushes wait for us.

When crows fall
we bury tobacco
with the dead.

In our icons their eyes
are glazed, impartial.
They gazed their pipes.

81. A Thirties Album

At first I thought it was a ledger,
The brown album hemmed between stacks
Of atlases in the second-hand bookshop.

There was no name on it, nowhere
A sign of its owner or its home.
Perhaps it lay on a writing-table

Near a window overlooking Cork,
Its cover the colour of leaves
That died in the garden outside.

Or it was a child's record,
Cut each evening from the paper
As the wireless crackled out news.

Throughout, the rind of politics
Is scattered: de Valera meeting
Chamberlain while a patriot's sister

Complains: Spain gored by war,
Botched sailings of the Irish Brigade,
Franco at home with his daughter, Carmen.

There's a letter from Maud Gonne and news
Of a modern bus stop on the Cabra Road,
Or the school in India where boys

Learn Irish in the fading light of the Raj.
Everywhere the weight of a closed decade:
Cardinals gathered at the Pope's side.

The small hands kept busy
Evening after evening, assembling
The days like petals into a book.

Years later when I look, it is faded
But intact, and it is all there,
From Herr Hitler's smile to the old

Women in Dublin aged 112, who went
No farther than Mayo north in her life.
I liked best the story of the poet in Georgia

Which walks on his forepaws only,
Or the insect that can fly at 818 mph
And looks like a squashed fly on the page.

82. Tokyo in May

Poets who love laundry metaphors
and similes, visit here in May.

Not Ginza nor Shibuya, but ride the Setagaya
Line to Madaenae, near Shimo-Teikido.

Walk thru the station past 'Meat Shop'
'Ogawa' – bike stands in front, movie house

just ahead on the left. Follow the asphalt
path and the railway tracks

until the small store with the vending machine,
turn right. It's there you will find

flapping clothes in the old-fashioned way,
continually, every day,

wind-tossed, sun-drenched, image-making, concept
forming laundry, enough for a volume.

83. Daisy B. Shows Her Holiday Snaps

. . . a detached bungalow – the kitchen's a dream – our Julie
doesn't lift a finger – a woman – one of them – a maid – does it all –
cooking, cleaning, minding the children – doesn't live in the
house – a place – at the end of the garden – everything she needs –
it's brick – not a hut – a bedroom, a toilet – that's what they do
out there – and the garden – big coloured flowers and bushes – cut
back tidily – not wild – lovely lawns – a boy does them – he's got
grey hair but they call them boys – that's what they do out
there – and they're that poor – our Julie – she's always had a good
heart – gives the maid baby clothes – her babies are back somewhere
with her mother – she can go to see them – take them things – that's
what they do out there – no her husband doesn't work for Julie
and Ken – he lives in a hostel – to be near his work – more convenient –
I don't know when she sees him – but she mustn't see –
the weather was beautiful – they took me all over – I saw this man
done up in all his regalia and women with nothing on up top –
they don't see anything wrong in it – that's how they are –
they keep to their own parts – they like it like that – Ken says
they're not ready for what we have – it's for their own good –
and the policemen have these funny whips – that's what they do
out there – I don't think I'll be going again – I've seen where
she is now – and you see all that on the telly – it's nowhere
near them – they couldn't live like that over here – that kitchen –
and the weather's that sunny – I didn't need my Aran once – after
knitting it special – it won't last – it's just them getting out
of hand a bit – Ken's had a fence made – to keep the dogs in –
pets, but big – really soft, but not with strangers – though it's
nowhere near them – it's just what they're doing out there . . .

84. Child-death song

We saw the four-month-old 'foetus' asleep
in his trench on the battlefield, face down in mud,
as if worshipping: a conqueror
conquered. A greater Lord than Life must have

flung a harpoon: he had not had to be born.
By us it had to be borne – that we, only
just introduced to his peculiar,
peace-bringing being, could now never know

him: released like a prisoner-of-war into
airy regions of ear-splitting Bach or god-
knows-what. His mother – she had called him
'Linus': *flax or linen: child Linus, most*

wondrous of musicians: *therefore murdered by*
Apollo – is the grave where her baby lies,
not lapped in linen. Gone back to the
sea from which he came, she cannot now call

him back, in harp or flute or viol: gone beyond
music, he must remain a name among names.
a blank in a sea of dreams.

His heart,
a collapsed accordion, was it punctured
by joy, that his father caved in at last, and
even looked forward to him: as when, scrambling
to a brazen summit, someone catches –
sweaty and scratched and wishing he'd never

embarked on the climb – a glimpse, through the arch of
a fortress in ruins, of a sea which is
soothing?

Thus in the presence of the
radiographer and in the light of

death, he eased us into being, as we – who'd
been falling apart – were blessed by sadness, as
he – slipping his anchor – vanished, for
better or worse, with not so much as a

squeak or a chord or a pang.

Funeral music
pleases, for a time: uncurled, unscorched,
like the sea. And – as the inspiring
sun (Apollo now grinning) strikes a sterile

bitter ocean – breeds, establishes, unites

Letters

Anti-Arab Feeling in the United States

Sir, – We respectfully disagree with Christopher Hitchens's assertion in his "American notes" column of May 30, in which he notes that he has "yet to read of a single denunciation by any Jewish spokesman" of threats or attacks against Arabs in the United States. Although previously unaware of the specific threat against Edward Said by the fringe Jewish Defense League, we can offer several examples.

Following the tragic murder in October 1985 of Alex Odeh, the West Coast regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), public statements by Jewish spokesmen condemning the murder were recorded in a number of publications. Among them *Present Tense*, published by the American Jewish Committee, in its Winter 1986 issue features as its cover story "The 'Quiet' Death of Alex Odeh". The article cites statements condemning violence against Arab-Americans issued by the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Orange County (California) Jewish Community Relations Council, the Long Beach Jewish Community Center and the Los Angeles chapter of the New Jewish Agenda. The *Los Angeles Times* of October 12, 1985, reported the statement of the American Jewish Committee's Orange County regional director, Hinda Beral, condemning the murder of Alex Odeh. The *New York Times* of October 13, 1985, and the *Christian Science Monitor* of October 23, 1985, reported similar statements by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

On December 6, 1985, following the arson of ADC headquarters in Washington, DC, the *Washington Post* reported the condemnations of the crime by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington and of Daniel Thursz, President of B'nai B'rith International. A full-page advertisement sponsored by the "Ad Hoc Coalition Against Terrorism in America" was published in the *New York Times* of January 5, 1986. The advertisement, which condemned violence against Arab-Americans, included the following acknowledgement: "We welcome the expressions of concern from the American Jewish Committee, International B'nai B'rith, Washington Jewish Community Council and the New Jewish Agenda."

On July 16, 1986, David Gordis, Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Committee, testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, which was examining, "Ethnically-Motivated Attacks against Arab-Americans". In his testimony, Dr Gordis cited the AJC's statements condemning Alex Odeh's murder and the arson of ADC headquarters in Washington. He noted that AJC representatives had met FBI Director William Webster and had "urged" that various steps be taken to identify and prosecute those responsible.

American Jewish concern over attacks against Arab-Americans is part of our broader concern over the phenomenon of terrorism in general. We condemn terrorist acts as criminal regardless of their motivation, and whether their target is an American Jewish tourist confined to a wheelchair (Leon Klinghoffer) or an American or Palestinian origin (Alex Odeh or Edward Said).

GEORGE E. GRUBEN,
HARRY MILKMAN,
Israel and Middle East Affairs Division, American Jewish Committee, Institute of Human Relations,
165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.

By joy, that his father caved in at last, and
even looked forward to him: as when, scrambling
to a brazen summit, someone catches –
sweaty and scratched and wishing he'd never

embarked on the climb – a glimpse, through the arch of
a fortress in ruins, of a sea which is
soothing?

Thus in the presence of the
radiographer and in the light of

death, he eased us into being, as we – who'd
been falling apart – were blessed by sadness, as
he – slipping his anchor – vanished, for
better or worse, with not so much as a

squeak or a chord or a pang.

Funeral music
pleases, for a time: uncurled, unscorched,
like the sea. And – as the inspiring
sun (Apollo now grinning) strikes a sterile

predicament of an educated woman in the Middle East. When I read the book I was perfectly aware that the transliteration was not in accordance with the scholarly standards of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. But the author's rendering of Arabic names and words is perfectly acceptable in a non-academic book. I would agree with Ms Soueif that there may be a few misprints and small factual errors, none of them of great importance, but she may have failed to notice the significance of the information contained on the back flap of the jacket that the book was first published in the United States. In accordance with normal practice, Quartet Books agreed to offset from the US edition, and it would, as any publisher knows, have been technically difficult and expensive to make any corrections.

Some of your readers might not be aware that the reviewer, in spelling her name Soueif and not Suwayf, is also departing (quite acceptably) from strict Arabic transliteration.

ZELFA HOURANI,
Quartet Books, 27-29 Goodge Street, London W1.

'The Minister and the Massacres'

Sir, – Not wishing to enter into an "exchange of personalities" (*sic*) with Nikolai Tolstoy, let me now attempt a final summing up of the correspondence on his book.

First, Tolstoy has failed to sustain the serious allegations he has made against Harold Macmillan. He has not undermined my original contention that while Macmillan was certainly in favour of handing over both Cossacks and Yugoslavs he did not play the central or initiating role. Nor has he shown that Macmillan deliberately flouted official British policy by including non-Soviet citizens in order to do Stalin and his secret police a good turn.

Second, Tolstoy has failed to refute my criticism that he has seriously distorted the historical context in which the hand-overs took place and that in doing so he has presented a rose-tinted picture of the Cossacks. He still seems unable to accept that they fought – with some enthusiasm and considerable bloodthirstiness – on behalf of the Third Reich. This does not, of course, mean that the British were right to hand them over. They were not. But it does suggest that in discussing their case more restraint and less romanticism are called for. No one has alleged that Tolstoy is a Nazi sympathizer. But neo-Nazis – or anyone else for that matter – will have to search long and hard before they "learn something" of Nazi crimes from his book, as Tolstoy claims.

Third, both in his book and his letters, Tolstoy has repeatedly distorted, misread or ignored important evidence and showed a striking gift for smear and innuendo. On one point alone I admit he is right. He did indeed argue in his book – and not merely in his second letter – that the hand-overs might involve a serious risk to British lives. But this does not make this argument any more plausible. Brigadier Musson's order simply cannot carry the weight of the argument assigned to it. That is, that the military risk involved was so great that only a pressing political imperative could have made it acceptable. Difficult though the operation was, there is no evidence that it was seen in these terms by those at 5th Corps HQ whose job it was to weigh these factors.

Finally, it is good to hear of the existence of "an important microfilm archive . . . which may throw entirely new light on the problem". I trust that it will join the tapes of Tolstoy's interviews which, I understand, are to go to Stanford University, where they will be subjected to the scrutiny required of reputable historical scholarship. Before Tolstoy comes to publish a paperback version of his book perhaps he will also find time to consult the evidence at the Public Record Office which he was unable to examine earlier. I will be happy to help him in his search and to point out a number of additional mistakes which I have come across since writing my original review.

ROBERT KNIGHT,
10 Hever Place, Canterbury, Kent.

Richard D. Altick's *Paintings from Books*, an illustration from which appeared in our August 8 issue, is published at \$60, not \$50 as was stated in the caption.

Walter Gropius

Sir, – No one would wish to deprive Maxwell Fry of his memories of Walter Gropius (Letters, August 32) nor, indeed, to denigrate Gropius's contribution to modern architecture, difficult though it is to estimate fairly. But if Mr Fry re-reads Joseph Rykwert's piece he will see that it is a review of a book that apparently deals largely with Gropius's life and personality and, as Rykwert himself observes, too little with his architecture. Fry's complaint should be addressed to the author of the book not of the review.

But this is preliminary to two more important points. First, to the historian, Gropius's pre-1919 architecture is already suspect, since the way in which he designed the two important buildings of the period, the factory at Alfeld-an-der-Leine and the "Model Factory" at Cologne, is in contradiction to the design principles he enunciated shortly after and for which he is famous. The former building was styled to look "modern" and American while the latter (highly praised as an early original contribution to the industrial essence of modern architecture) was in fact a pastiche involving the re-use of part of an earlier building. These things have emerged into the light of day through historical enquiry, as has the re-evaluation of Gropius's role at the Bauhaus. It would not be right to ignore them in order to enshrine Gropius's memory, and this is just what Fry seems to be asking for.

Second, it is essential that Maxwell Fry and other architects who worked with Gropius, and who evidently esteem him, should lose no time in imparting their detailed recollections of his architectural capacity. Their failure, so far, to do so has contributed to the fading of his reputation, a tendency that seems certain to accelerate.

JACQUES PAUL,
30 The Plantation, Morden Road, Blackheath,
London SE3.

Cultural Property

Sir, – I fear Edward Ullendorff (Letters, August 15) reads too much into my reference to the 1946 Peace Treaty with Italy. I cited this as "an interesting precedent for the restitution of looted cultural property" – the subject of Robert Browning's wide-ranging survey of the history of loot (July 25). I did not at any point compare or intend to compare British military intervention in Ethiopia in 1867-8 with the Italian Fascist invasion of 1935-6.

The letter of 1872 from Emperor Yohannes IV requesting the return of the *Glory of the Kings*, to which Professor Ullendorff refers, raises interesting questions. The Amharic text, as Ullendorff was the first to note (*Bulletin of SOAS*, 1969, 32), did not make use of the phrase found in the English translation prepared by the Emperor's envoy, "General" Kirkham: "My people will not obey my orders without it." The question still remains: why was Yohannes so interested in this particular manuscript?

Having examined the volume in Addis Ababa, and more recently studied a microfilm of it, my personal view is that his interest lay not simply in the *Glory of the Kings*, but also in other material contained in the manuscript, such as title-deeds, lists of property, tax data, etc, later referred to by Conti Rossini as the *Liber Axumae*. The manuscript, if this was the case, would have been valued on account of its administrative and economic records as much as for its symbolic role as a legendary "charter" linking the Ethiopian dynasty to the biblical King Solomon. The work also includes a rare Ethiopian "map" showing Aksum surrounded by several provinces – the subject of a paper presented at the 8th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa in 1984.

Without wishing to sound pedantic, the distinction between purchase and loot is, I feel, a significant one. Professor Ullendorff is, of course, quite correct in saying that the manuscripts from Magdala were purchased. However, the purchasers, in true military tradition, were knowingly acquiring looted property.

RICHARD PANKHURST,
22 Lawn Road, London NW3.



Between Victor Burgin

In the visual arts, the most radical of today's 'postmodernist' tendencies has been the challenge posed to traditional, previously unquestioned, assumptions by contemporary ideas about representation, deriving from semiotics, psychoanalysis and feminism. The work of Victor Burgin has had a particular impact.

Victor Burgin is known equally for his theoretical writings as for his work as an artist. This book brings Burgin's innovative and influential work to a wider audience. Interweaving his visual work with fragments from interviews, talks and letters, it offers insight into the relation of 'theory' to 'practice' in a form of art which has undermined the very basis of this distinction.

192 pages, 110 photographs, paperback £10.95 (0 631 15235 0)

Published in association with the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London

Camera Culture HALLA BELOFF

'This is an exciting book, clearly the result of many years' absorption with the subject and a real desire to write about it. . . . The book is beautifully produced and its points well illustrated throughout the text by about 100 photographs. If you have ever taken a photograph, looked with interest at one or objected to one being taken, you should read it.' *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society* 262 pages, £14.95 (0 631 13989 3)

Basil Blackwell

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New York NY 10018

COMMENTARY

A slice of verismo

Peter Porter

Ossessione
Renoir Cinema

Ossessione is an extraordinary film to have been made in Italy in 1942. There is no sign anywhere that the war was already going badly for the Italians and that in a couple of years the beautiful and melancholy country of the Marches and the Po Delta and the sombre towns from Ancona to Rovigo would be devastated by bombs. Two scenes have a poignancy which has nothing to do with film-making as such. In one, the drifter Gino and his newly acquired friend, an itinerant showman nicknamed "Lo Spagnolo", are looking out over Ancona harbour across the moles where somewhere in the hazy Adriatic a warship is hoisting. Behind them is the cathedral where Pius II tried to launch his Crusade in 1464. Much of the old town was wiped out in the war. Then when Gino tries to run away from Giovanna, with whom he has colluded in murdering her husband, their confrontation takes place outside the Castello Estense in Ferrara, the streets and piazza thronged with women wearing "wedgies" and men in drupe suits. Can this be the Italy of Mussolini, you wonder?

Much has been made of Visconti's pre-echoing, in this his first feature film, of the post-war realism which made the Italian cinema famous, and almost as much of *Ossessione*'s debt to American story-telling. Certainly, Visconti's and his script-writers' stealing the plot of James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, something easy enough to do in wartime copyright conditions, has kept the film off our screens for too long. But it is not really a case of admiring the way Visconti brings an American story of adultery and murder to life in a quintessentially Italian landscape. The plot, after all, is strongly reminiscent of *Cavaleria rusticana*, and Cain's characters are

archetypal enough to turn up in any impoverished community.

Visconti, the great opera producer, handles his film as if it were a supreme piece of verismo. The realism is magnificently staged: the crowds that gather in Ferrara and by the side of the canal after the fatal car accident are like operatic choruses; the amateur singing contest resembles Verdi's banquet scenes in *Macbeth* and *Otello*. Music is used throughout with tactful irony. Visconti appreciates that the love of opera among ordinary Italians is often comic but always serious, so when the fat husband wins a prize for his rendition of "Di Provenza il mar, il suol" his performance looks grotesque but is musically competent. *Ossessione* is a hymn of love to the Italian people: their faces, their carriage, their sense of being at home in the world, and Visconti's actors, professional and amateur, do him proud. It is also, of course, a steamy drama of sexual obsession and the approach of Nemesis, and here, perhaps, the action is more clichéd. Clara Calamai, as Giovanna, is sensuality personified, from the first moment she catches sight of Gino (Massimo Girotti) in her husband's sleazy canal-side trattoria, bulging out of his shirt and shoes. Girotti is so anachronistically handsome (an early model off the production line which later produced James Dean and Paul Newman) that he doesn't quite fit the lower depths surroundings. But the period restraint of the love scenes distils a more erotic ambience than the writhing and grinding of Jack Nicholson and Jessica Lange did in the most recent *Postman* remake. There is atmosphere galore: the husband shooting at what Auden called "pallidizing cats", while the lovers seek to avoid each other's eyes in the stifling kitchen. In the end, it is the long vistas and straight-banked canals, the vaporous heat among the ramshackle houses, the village priest cycling with a shotgun on his back in search of eels in the marshes, that are memorable.

A sense of honra

E. C. Riley

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA
Yerma
Blood Wedding
Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

In a poignant coincidence the Edinburgh Festival performance of Federico García Lorca's *Yerma* fell on the fiftieth anniversary of the poet's death. The rural Spain reflected in his tragic trilogy seems almost as remote to Spaniards of the Felipe González era as it does to foreigners. But the plays would not have been staged abroad as regularly as they have been for half a century if they were not less about Spain than they are about the conflict between the most powerful of human instincts and certain social and ethical taboos. In *Blood Wedding* the former wins the struggle, in *The House of Bernarda Alba* the latter does, in *Yerma* there is deadlock. Each time the outcome is death and desolation, which strongly suggests that the tragedy springs not from the subjection of one force by its opposite, but from the destructiveness of the tension itself.

In *Yerma* the opposing forces do not occupy separate camps, but come to grips within one woman, giving this play alone a single identifiable tragic heroine, or victim. It is hard to imagine an actress rising to the demands of the role better than Nuria Espert in the now famous production that Victor García brought to London thirteen years ago. She is still convincing as the almost kittenish Yerma in the first act, the girl who can still hope for a child. Beneath the tender vulnerability is a flinty toughness, and the switches from joy to anguish are finely modulated to the steady growth of an all-consuming desperation, in which nothing is missing but a degree of vocal projection. Hers must be one of the great tragic performances of our day.

She and her accomplished cast show how fluid is the line between erotic and parental love. Yerma embraces Maria's foot which becomes a babe in her arms. Moments of intense

activity on stage alternate with brooding stillness. The chorus of washerwomen do not stay planted at their scrubbing stones but, amazingly, swarm like flies with start-stop movements over the peaked sloping stage, whirling like dervishes. The balletic effects complement the pared-down starkness of the tragedy. Lorca's semi-pagan fertility masque is replaced by a reredos of writhing bodies, one female, five male, underlining the point that Yerma's only hope of children lies in other men than her husband Juan — but her sense of *honra* has closed this road to her. The tilted pentagonal trampoline stage with its versatile membrane is at times too much of a mechanical distraction and renders Yerma's strangling of Juan invisible from the first six rows of the stalls. But these are minor flaws.

José Luis Gómez's production of *Blood Wedding* had a more enthusiastic reception by Festival audiences and some critics. I imagine this is mainly because the strong and simple story is allowed to tell itself visually, for the most part to good effect, with a liberal use of folk music to underpin emotion. But unsuitable rhetoric and misplaced emphases in the dialogue and a general lack of nuance result in a loss of depth. There are a few innovations, notably the Moon, played not as Lorca's young woodsman but by a naked young woman in clay-white paint. The effect is quite striking and like a figure out of Beardsley. Much more questionable is the way villagers stand or sit around like a flamenco troupe in a café. This might signify the ever-watchful eye of the community, *honra's* guardian, *el quedito*. But when the Neighbour gets up from her stool and tells the Mother that she has just dropped in to see her and what a long way she has come, the effect is silly. A line of men, including the dead Bridegroom and Leonardo, is ranged like wax-works upstage in the last scene. Lorca had carefully excluded every male from this epilogue to make clear the point that the ultimate victims of the blood feud are the bereaved and lonely women. The Espert production, though far more drastically novel in presentation, does not make this kind of mistake.



"Village well, Cher Valley", 1986, by Gordon Joy, one of twelve artists commissioned to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Alain-Fournier. An exhibition of their work, The Lost Domain: A Quest in Solange, old Berry and the Valley of the Cher for Alain-Fournier and the World of Le Grand Meaulais is at the Francis Kyle Gallery, 9 Maddox Street, London W1 until September 11.

Mainstream from Leningrad

Arthur Jacobs

SERGEY SLONIMSKY
Maria Stuart
P. I. TCHAIKOVSKY
The Queen of Spades. Eugene Onegin
King's Theatre, Edinburgh

"How boring for her in Edinburgh!" The speaker was Elizabeth I, referring to Mary Queen of Scots. Since she was speaking in Russian, not many in the Edinburgh Festival audience took the point. Sergey Slonimsky's recent opera *Maria Stuart* was one of the presentations brought by the Maly Theatre of Leningrad to the King's Theatre, along with Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and Eugene Onegin. The transfer of these productions from a theatre with a considerably bigger stage no doubt caused some of the delays and clumsiness noted at Edinburgh, but the shortcomings of Slonimsky's opera were not to be excused by that. They were, however, considerably aggravated by inept stage direction. The spectacle of John Knox's Puritans repeatedly crossing themselves was too much for Scottish and some other eyes.

In this "opera-ballad", as the composer calls it, closed song-forms and old-fashioned sturdy choruses are used for a merely sentimental or rousing effect. Subtlety, not to mention irony, is missing. A brassy American-style march, with displaced jazzy accents, is the most disturbing and puzzling item of the score: it cannot even be meant to convey parody or the alienation, as does the Offenbach-like policeman's chorus in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. The composer (a nephew of the American musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky) has reportedly cultivated a more modern and sophisticated style in concert works, and one could only draw the worst possible conclusions about the criteria considered desirable in today's Soviet operatic theatres.

No great expectations, however, should have been raised of the Maly, the junior of Leningrad's two long-established state companies. All three Edinburgh presentations were those of a single stage director, Stanislav Gaudasinsky (apparently the leader of the company), under a single undistinguished conductor, Valentin Kozhin. There was a poor chorus, a tolerable orchestra, and an ensemble of soloists evidently under considerable artistic pressure. Nina Romanova, one of its best artists, one of the few women without a distres-

Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, directed by Nuria Espert, will open at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, on Monday, September 8, in a new translation by Robert David MacDonald, with designs by Ezio Frigerio and costumes by Franca Squarapino. Leading roles are played by Glenda Jackson, Joan Plowright and Patricia Hayes. This production will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

sing hardness or wobble on higher notes, was employed every night — as Pauline in *The Queen of Spades*, as Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, and as Elizabeth I. There was little vocal distinction in the Slonimsky opera, certainly not in the title-role (Svetlana Volkova). Vladimir Ognovenko's imposingly big bass voice in *Bothwell* was nullified by being monotonously used.

In a Festival which impoverished the loves of "mainstream" opera, it was perhaps welcome that Leningrad's Tchaikovsky selection was of his two most familiar works. For all that they distort Pushkin as their literary source, they maintain their power as musical drama. Newcomers to *The Queen of Spades*, however, were unhelpt by a printed programme which transformed Monsieur Triquet (the young ladies' French tutor) into Trike, with a synopsis omitting him altogether. His aria, which should be properly in French, was sung according to the bad old Soviet custom in Russian, but sung well, and strongly characterized, by Vladimir Naparin.

The Queen of Spades herself (that is, the old Countess so nicknamed) was strongly represented by Irina Bogachova. The role of the obsessed Herman lends itself to him, and Anatoly Kapustin did not escape the charge. But there was a stroke of dramatic power: when Herman confronts the Countess alone in her bedroom, carrying a pistol, it is quite evidently he who is afraid of her and not the other way round. Lisa, appealingly portrayed by Valentina Yuzvenko, was deprived by the inadequate scenery of her suicide in the scene. The masque with Tchaikovsky's mock-rocco music was charmingly accomplished with the help of the company's dancers.

Given the conservatism of the Soviet artistic establishment, no radical re-thinking of a classic was to be envisaged — nor, in the case of these Tchaikovsky works, is it called for. But a feeble attempt at a conceptual approach almost spoilt what was otherwise the best of the three presentations. Noting that the heart of *Eugene Onegin* is Tatiana's Letter Scene, the unnamed designer allowed gauzes bearing images of handwriting to appear not only as part of the set but also as part of the costumes. It made nonsense, and the heavy frames of a huge semicircular window did their best to obscure Tatiana in the Letter Scene itself. But, in the second performance the animated, unforced singing of Lyubov Kazarmontseva (Tatiana), Nina Romanova (Olga), and Nikolay Koplov (Onegin) was matched with just the right naturalness of manner; it was a pity that Nikolay Ostrovsky (Lensky), starting well, could not sustain the lyrical line throughout.

If festival opera should be first-class opera, this was not it. But if it is the beginning of a closer acquaintance with Soviet opera, leading to the possibility of insisting on improved standards, then in retrospect the Maly company's visit will not necessarily be counted to the credit of Frank Dunlop's festival direction.

Plot and scheme

Christopher Hawtree

SIMON RAVEN
Before the Cock Crow
274pp. Blond. £9.95.
0384 31177 X

"And every heart think loathingly / Its dearest changed to bores", wrote Hopkins, in some lines so chilling that they could supplant all those which have served as epigraphs for Simon Raven's "Alms For Oblivion" saga, its associated volumes, and its successor, "The First-Born of Egypt", which has now reached the half-way mark.

The narrator's elegant malevolence in the first series matched the dextrous, shifting allegiances of his characters, whose eyes were ever on the main chance. The series remains one of the most convincing and entertaining accounts of a post-war Britain whose inhabitants, however temporarily hard-up, could always rustle up the wherewithal to escape the ennui of the encroaching Welfare State. The effect was like that of Raven's admired Trollope transposed down a few keys, silence no longer urged upon the Duke of Omnium when about to break into lusty reminiscence.

Such were the physical and mental torments endured by this unsavoury crew in pursuit of their pleasures that one developed for them an affection which became all the greater with each appalling situation Raven contrived. One could not but regret the absence of their spirit when Raven was urged to embark on a new series, in which characters from the intervening volumes, such as the irritating Ptolemaeos Tonne, were drafted in to fill out the cast while the newcomers grew to an age at which they might plot and scheme in their turn. The hesitancy of the first volume, *Morning Star*, became desperation in the second, *Face of the Waters* — its crucifixion scene, lacking the old bad taste, was simply bad — and the characters, too insubstantial to bore one another, bored the reader.

With the new addition, *Before the Cock Crow* (which sees off, *inter alia*, old Tonne), there is a return to focus. It is now 1980, something of which we are reminded by Raisley Conyngham, a schoolmaster whose rich and strange designs are at the centre of the novel. He advises a boy not to read Proust yet — "There's a new and much better translation, by my old acquaintance Terry Kilmartin, due to be published in less than a year". Meanwhile, there are Balzac, *Twelfth Night* and a bizarre plot whose kaleidoscopic shiftings are

smoothed out by the equally malign impulses of young Jeremy Morrison:

Someone you have loved suddenly becomes a boring, importunate nuisance . . . He asks no more than he ever did, but this will now be too much for you . . . When the struggle is between decency and convenience, convenience has a way of winning, and that is the way of it here. Quite simply, Fielding Gray has become inconvenient to me, an embarrassing feature of a life which I now forswear.

A new life on the land can hardly content Morrison for long, some other scheme is afoot, and, after antagonizing enough people to ensure a sticky future, he is reunited with his old mentor at a race-meeting which rivals the copulation competition in *Sound the Retreat* and the chapel scene in *Places Where They Sing* as one of Raven's most disgraceful set-pieces.

All this bodes well for a pair whose lives will be made no easier by the boys who, under Conyngham's tutelage, will now only have time to read Proust if their other activities are pre-empted by Raven's forthcoming memoir, *The Old School*.

Work and rule

Adewale Maja-Pearce

MARJORIE OLUDHE MACGOYE
Coming to Birth
150pp. Heinemann. £10.95.
0 434 44028 0

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's first novel, which won this year's Sinclair Prize, covers the recent history of Kenya from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, from colonialism to post-independence. She could hardly have chosen a more volatile period, although Kenya has been luckier than most. Luckier, certainly, than neighbouring Uganda, a country which "left you with a feeling of dread — its kings, its crocodiles, its martyred history, its excesses of dress, devotion and, in recent years, of devious violence". Kenya has managed to avoid the twin curses of post-independence Africa, civil war and military rule, and it is perhaps because of this that *Coming to Birth* is ultimately an optimistic novel.

The central character, Pauline Were, leaves her village at the age of sixteen to join her husband Martin in a small room in a Nairobi slum. She is three months pregnant. Martin is full of himself. With talk of independence in the air and his first child on the way, not to mention a good job as a salesman, the future is his. But within days of her arrival Pauline loses

Mix and marry

Robert Brain

EBOU DIBBA
Chaff on the Wind
203pp. Macmillan. Paperback, £1.90.
0 333 41278 8

Two young men leave their up-river villages for the freedom and opportunities of the Gambian coast. Patch, a picaresque hero, swims into the chaotic urban world like a fish in water. Dinding, a more plodding hero, leaves his family and village with qualms, comforted by a bottle of sacred water given to him by his strict father and a gold ring by his mother. As the ship moves away from the makeshift jetty Patch turns to make friends with passengers and crew, while Dinding gazes regretfully at the cosmos of the village and paths which he sees as an ordered whole for the first and last time.

In town Patch takes everything in his stride, the child. This is a foretaste of what is to come as the high hopes of independence gradually give way to a bloody power struggle and economic stagnation.

As the country's problems multiply, so the couple's marriage deteriorates. After another miscarriage Martin sends her to his village to look after his elderly parents while he takes up with a succession of women, none of whom can provide him with a child. Paulina, who embarks on an affair herself, finally gives birth to a son by her lover; but the child is killed by a stray bullet at a political rally not long after his second birthday.

Paulina moves back to Nairobi and secures a job looking after the household of a young middle-class Kenyan couple. There she meets up with her estranged husband and notes the change she sees in him:

But he was growing all the same. He had adjusted from a vision of freedom in which the figure of a mythical leader, released from prison, hovered distant and glorious like the Queen, to an actual country in which shops and houses changed hands, the wage structure remained very much the same, and the man you, addressed as 'sir' haggled just as before over discounts and overtime.

They make a life of sorts together. Martin is away much of the time trying to make a living, but as they gradually reach an accommodation she discovers she is pregnant again. There is still hope for the future.

This is a well-written novel. The author, already known as a poet, is sensitive to language and particularly good at evoking the sights and smells of city life. Unfortunately she tries to do too much. Where she restricts herself to the changing relationships between the various characters over time, particularly between Pauline and Martin, she can hardly be faulted; it is when she attempts to make their story carry the burden of post-colonial politics that she is least convincing.

Live and learn

Jaci Stephen

CARYL RIVERS
Girls Forever Brave and True
371pp. Deutsch. £9.95.
0 233 98045 8

This novel, the sequel to Caryl Rivers's *Virgins*, brings the three childhood friends of the immaculate Heart High School back together in their native Washington. Peg Morrison has fulfilled her ambition and won the Pulitzer Prize; Constance Masters is working her way up in journalism; and Kitty Cohen involves herself with the social side of life. To every woman, there is a man: Peg still loves her childhood sweetheart, Sean McCaffrey — but, he is now a practising priest; Constance is married — but, to an alcoholic; Kitty lives with Dan — but, he is a mere pawn in his rise to political power.

Girls is neat, well-structured and formulaic: a story of love, passion, self-revelation, ambition and deceit — a Catholic *Dallas*, minus the

picking up casual work and casual girls. Dinding, alarmed at the apparent agnostic chaos of the streets, steers clear of the lovely girls and other temptations, learns to read and write and starts to sell rice in the local market. Patch elopes with the young wife of the local scribe. Dinding sticks to the straight and narrow, ingratiates himself with his Dioula wholesaler, becomes a successful trader and marries the boss's daughter.

Dinding and Patch's friendship is enlivened by the contrast of their characters. Dinding, living at the top, is fascinated by Patch's rejection of conventional morality, but always sniffs his orange squash in case his friend has laced it with forbidden spirits. Patch's life at the bottom is somewhat cushioned by his friend's business contacts and respectability. In the end Patch is killed in a brawl in Dakar in front of his wife and child, and as a direct result of the smuggling he has been doing on Dinding's behalf.

The charm of this first novel from the Gambia lies very much in the unpretentious picture it gives of the West African coast in the 1930s, both the patterned world of the villages and the free-wheeling bustle of the town. It is a sensuous world, coloured not by Cole Porter songs and champagne but by the spices of jollof rice, the beat of Saturday-night band music, local songs and proverbs, the smiles and scents of black girls. *Chaff on the Wind* is a loosely knit novel which allows for the coming and going of a number of delightful characters not directly involved in the central theme: traders, farmers, cooks, labourers, magicians, healers, the faded silhouettes of whites.

One of the more vivid of these loose strands is a glimpse into the life of Gambian creoles, the *signaras*, a shadowy world peopled by the relics of a more elegant European past: Syrian, Lebanese, Portuguese and French. The queen of this disappearing caste is the soft-eyed Madame who teaches a little fine sewing, a little French and a little *haute cuisine* to her less fortunate sisters. Madame, in fact a mademoiselle, has successfully avoided cultural and physical contamination by rejecting a host of suitors. Delicately scented and powdered, sitting loosely dressed in shady rooms, she slips into this novel about Patch and Dinding by the skin of her pearly teeth: in fact her cousin Charles is the aged scribe who loses his pretty wife to Patch. Madame, with her smattering of half-remembered Baudelaire, her special refinements, her hazy memories of Portuguese and French officers in shiny boots and feathers, is a distant goddess to the girls she is "finishing off". Her roots are everything to her; but "they are roots choked by the weeds of time and restricted by the drought of memory". To see her, writes Ebou Dibba, is to witness the marrying of the Middle Eastern baroque and the Portuguese rococo in one person. We leave her sipping cool palm wine from the cut-off bottoms of litre bottles as if it were champagne in flutes in a garden in Neuilly. Her final thought is that her life — rather like the book she embellishes — is a delicate mixture of happiness and sadness.

oil. The main "Will they? Won't they?" storyline, which centres on Peggy and Sean, is, in essence, pure Mills and Boon. But once again, Rivers's gifts as a writer are in evidence, and her comic vision sharpens itself on religion and sex.

But she also achieves a tone of comic sadness. The "personal" that, in childhood, was protected from the world is now, tempered by their various experiences, very much of it and helping to re-shape it — as history. To Peg, there are two groups of people in Washington: those with "a dream, a sense of history" and "The empty ones. *The hollow men*."

As the women try to make it in a town dominated by the latter kind, the value of friendship — for support, encouragement and laughter — is keenly felt at all times. The perverse workings of institutions and professions — the Church, journalism, politics — diminish in importance alongside traditional values. But the book never adopts a moralistic tone. It is uninhibited in its exploration of human emotion, and the message is simple: people live, and people learn.

All about Harry

Brian Morton

HUBERT SELBY JR.
Song of the Silent Snow
214pp. Marian Boyars. £7.95.
07145 28404

Hubert Selby Jr first came to notice in the 1950s as a writer of short fiction, publishing in *New Directions* and *Neon*, and in LeRoi Jones's influential anthology *The Moderns*, which appeared in 1963. Though *Song of the Silent Snow* is his first collection of short stories, ranging from the 1950s to the present, the bulk of his work has been episodic in character. His first "novel", *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (now best remembered for an absurd obscenity trial, post-*Chatterley*, in 1966), was a patchwork of loosely linked stories, and its successors seemed like short fiction that had proliferated. This worked well in *The Room* and *The Demon*; it conspicuously failed in his last book, *Requiem for a Dream* (1979).

LeRoi Jones likened Selby's characters to Spengler's *fellahen*, the wanderers who haunt the ruins of a civilization; Selby's is a vernacular – often scatological – account of the horrors of life without faith or hope. In the absence of belief, Selby suggests, life becomes either a headlong rush into apocalypse or else a slow numbing of the senses by ritualized, meaningless behaviour, the abstract "pieties" which survive the loss of belief.

In "Fat Phil's Day", the hero is held both by an absurd run of luck on the dice and by the anger of his fellow-players who force him to play on till he loses. In "Fortune Cookie", Selby's ubiquitous, undifferentiated "Harry" plains his business life round the muttios in sesame cakes; a momentary whim – as in *The*

Demon – becomes an all-encompassing obsession. In "The Coat", a wino invests a bottle of muscatel and an old greatcoat with almost religious significance. In both "Hi Champ" and "A Penny for Your Thoughts" the character's fantasies divorce him from reality, only to return him with a shattering jolt. The majority of the stories end not with the twist of well-made or formula fiction but with a breaking of mood that is only dramatic in the most rarefied sense.

It is the clash of aspiration, fantasy and desire with the boundaries of the purely contingent that provides the drama of Selby's work, and its ferocious poetry. Madness is a pervasive theme. In "The Sound", a man lying in a prison psychiatric block is haunted by a nameless threat. In "I'm Being Good", a crazed woman writes hopelessly, unanswered, from hospital to "Harold", charting her "progress". Each letter cancels out the last; the narrative is purely static.

The similarity to *The Room*, Selby's best work, and to *Requiem for a Dream*, suggests the extent to which he reworks ideas and situations. This is equally true of the quieter stories, such as "The Musician" or "Song of the Silent Snow", in which compulsion takes on a softer tone – almost dream-like – as characters sink into a hazy non-being. Giving that state too objective a source – drug-taking – and too overtly satirical a target – the failure of American aspirations – fatally weakened *Requiem*. Selby is not primarily a satirist. What light he casts on contemporary America comes almost wholly from within. The extremes he charts are as much as anything the extremes of language – as LeRoi Jones wrote of Selby's characters, "They are Americans no character in a John Updike novel would be happy to meet". Selby's hectic prose is light years from Updike's fine writing, but it has its own remarkable beauty.

Mice like men

John Clute

PETER VAN GREENAWAY
Mutants
237pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0575 038446

Ever since his first novel, *The Crucified City* (1962), Peter Van Greenaway has with the utmost consistency honed and intensified what must be one of the oddest personal styles in all popular literature. It is a style in which everything bears an air of the most bizarre off-handedness, and in which the high points of highly melodramatic plots tend not to be narrated at all, except in ellipses. Whatever their origin or their line of work, his characters converse with one another like dons who have mixed in Dada, mumbly and sideways. They are class-conscious, live in strange, tiny villages near the science-fictional Institutes which give them employment, and they overawe stolid coppers. There is throughout an air of the most surreal Englishry. Van Greenaway's novels could happen nowhere else but this country; nor could he.

Mutants is surely a case in point. There is a central *donnée*, a vision of giant ravenous humanoid mice that travesty mankind at its worst, but Van Greenaway hardly affords the reader more than a glimpse of them. The effect is horrific enough at times, but it is also slightly deadening. With all their emblematic viciousness, the mice are never brought into focus, and when the plot leaves them utterly, half-way through, they never return, though it can be assumed that they are continuing, somewhere, to devour England.

The story itself boasts some infernal – though hardly dwelt-on – complexities, but boils down to a kind of peripatetic rumination

on the subject of scientific responsibility. Quentin Quarrier, in an obsessive search for a pregnancy-accelerating drug, has cut some corners, taken some undue risks with a strain of injected mice, whose pregnancies are dramatically shortened, but who begin to breed with insane abandon, and also grow like beasts. They escape from the Institute, or so it seems. Quentin denies all responsibility; mummifying berserk mice is not his job, even if he created them.

This position is of course untenable. Quentin and his wife talk it through. Diversions and flashbacks jump the story a long way indeed from the actual mice to introduce espionage, intellectual envy, an off-stage hell of murder and suicide. There are moments of edgy brilliance, and also some sentences which no one in this world has ever uttered, or ever will. While the horrors of value-neutral science gnaw at the pillars of the world, somewhere else in *Mutants* the talk goes on, laws are mown, and yet another decorous suicide cleans the air of the importunities of guilt. If there is something missing in this it is English; if there is something civilized, it is English.

Desecrations

Anthony Sattin

CHRISTOPHER BURNS
Snakewrist
240pp. Cape. £9.95.
0224 023519

At the beginning of *Snakewrist*, Christopher Burns's first novel, three disparate characters are brought together: Sophie Parnaby, a devout Christian who followed her no-god adventuring brother Dexter to the South American rain-forests to spread the word of the Lord; an Indian from a rival tribe of the one the Parnabys befriended, whom she saves from what she believes to be certain death; and Toby Savage, a young graduate whom, many years later, Sophie employs, ostensibly to catalogue the Parnaby library in London. Dexter was lost when his plane crashed in the rain forest; Sophie relies on Toby's ambition to lead him to write Dexter's official biography and, in that at least, she judges correctly.

When the three of them travel to the rain forest, Jorge's return to the mission station has great significance for the Indians there. He is revealed as *Snakewrist*, an appellation he received for the rope burns which scarred him when, as a young man at the mission, he was tied to a cross during the Easter pageant. Since his departure, we learn through some restrained scenes, the village has been desecrated and the chief humbled; by returning *Snakewrist* to his own tribe, the Indians believe, they will appease their angry gods.

The range of character and location highlight the confidence and strength of imagination with which Burns is writing. Apart from the three central figures, there is a strong supporting cast which is only occasionally let down by forced dialogue or over-writing. There is radical Rachel, who condemns the Parnabys as "crazed, selfish murderers"; Becky, Sophie's servant, who is sexually abused by Jorge; and, in the rain forest, Deadface, the chief who captured Jorge as a child, and Reflection/Laila, the Indian girl who falls for Toby. All are well-defined and vivid.

The plight of the inhabitants of the South American rain forests has obviously troubled Burns. Wisely, though, he has proceeded with caution, avoiding emotion as far as possible, and using irony to highlight the destructive side of the western obsession with "progress". His portrayal of the Indians, although it occasionally falls into the "noble savage" trap, plays sympathy and understanding. His novel seems a little trite, however – Toby, already renamed "the Idiot", is mauled to death by violating a sacred tribal ritual, and Dexter Parnaby is found (by *Snakewrist*, of course) mangled in his wrecked plane, covered with moths. It all seems too easy. But there is no doubt any sort of happy ending in the desecrated developments from which this novel springs – Burns understands the inevitability of the Indians' destruction and, in the ending, fights off even the slightest glimmer of hope.

Incomplete attachments

John Weightman

HENRY DE MONTHERLANT
Moustique
194pp. Paris: La Table Ronde. 75 fr.
27103 02748

It is now fourteen years since the ailing Montherlant, unwilling to accept the indignity of physical decline, chose a "Roman" exit by committing suicide. He obviously stage-managed his death with courage, so that it should be in keeping with the haughty, latter-day Samurai image of himself that he presents in much of his work, either speaking directly in his own name or indirectly through his conquering, bull-fighting, womanizing heroes.

But even in his lifetime there was some gossip about the authenticity of this persona. During the furor about *Pitié pour les femmes*,

I remember another French novelist remarking with a smile, "Il n'est pas difficile de détester les femmes, quand on ne les aime pas." Then, in 1982, Pierre Sipriot's biography, *Montherlant sans masque*, uncovered hidden complexities, and a little later the extraordinary correspondence published by Roger Peyrefitte revealed that the flamboyant creator of several Don Juan figures was at least three-quarters paedophile, and that *la chasse or la drague* he refers to so often in his novels and diaries was the pursuit of adolescent boys, rather than of girls or women. This may explain why he did not choose to complete and publish *Moustique*, a fragmentary text written in 1929, and why his literary executors have decided that, a decent interval having now elapsed, it can at last appear.

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Incessant self-inseminations

John Kidd

SHELDON BRIVIC
Joyce the Creator
 177pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £18.30.
 0299 108084

BERYL SCHLOSSMAN
Joyce's Catholic Comedy of Language
 243pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £21.25.
 0299 101606

RICHARD BROWN
James Joyce and Sexuality
 216pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.
 0521 248116

JAMES VANDYCK CARD
An Anatomy of "Penelope"
 167pp. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
 £18.50.
 08386 31584

GRACE ECKLEY
Children's Lore in "Finnegans Wake"
 250pp. New York: Syracuse University Press.
 \$28.
 08156 23178

FRITZ SENN
Joyce's Dislocations: Essays on reading as translation
 225pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £20.40.
 08018 13150

GIORGIO MELCHIORI (Editor)
Joyce in Rome: The genesis of "Ulysses"
 153pp. Rome: Bulzoni.

DEREK ATTRIDGE and DANIEL FERRER
 (Editors)
Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French
 162pp. Cambridge University Press. £20
 (paperback, £6.95).
 0521 26636 X

James Joyce was a devilish creator, an aspirant to immortality. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are intricate models of the inner life, but so freighted with worldly bric-à-brac that the lay reader must yield to the professional on points of detail. Thus has Joyce created mirror worlds – the art and the exegesis.

Sheldon Brivic's topology of the godlike mind in *Joyce the Creator* argues that the artist "designed himself into his own work as a transcendental function that contains and informs his created universe". Joyce's metaphors for the divine mind include the sea, the dreaming giant, personalities of a family, and the world tree. The chance meetings and shared ideas of Bloomsday in Dublin reveal a plan to create eddies of individual thought within the reader's larger awareness. The interior monologues of *Ulysses* expose the Dubliners' Freudian unconscious, but another "Joycean unconscious" ushers them through the Homeric parallels and invisible scaffolding which Joyce erected in charts as a composition aid. The ablest expositor of Joyce's controlled mysticism, Brivic is also an adept in Jungian thought, Aristotle, Aquinas and Vico.

Joyce's Catholic Comedy of Language resumes the homely argument that he had "a special brand of Catholicism", but Beryl Schlossman, adapting her dissertation written under Julia Kristeva, takes a different tack and reaches another shore from the Jesuits who preceded her in the pilgrimage to Joyce's temple. She has landed on a Rabelaisian *Isle de Jouvissance* where every object emits and reveals in *Jouvissance* – a word for pleasure with connotations ranging from delight to orgasm. Just when we were beguiled by Brivic's sober portrait of the artist-creator, Schlossman interrupts the seduction with a prodigious exposure of profanity. Joyce's countless myths of temptation, fall, exile and resurrection, and his versions of immaculate conception and the gift of tongues, are undeniable; but the vorticism of Schlossman's style will confuse many and frighten some.

James Joyce and Sexuality was in press before Richard Brown turned thirty, but his study of sources, politics, biography and aesthetics may be the most versatile, urduite, well-tempered and theoretically self-aware short study of Joyce yet published. Brown co-edits with Peter Bekker the *James Joyce Broadsheet* (London), which has seized the Joycean high ground from the middle-aged *James Joyce Quarterly* (Tulsa). Concerned more with structural than with trifling allusions, Brown argues that the sexological trébuchets, histories

of marriage law and novels of adultery in Joyce's personal library gave him an expertise on human love from Adam (a proto-cuckold, Joyce noted) to the New Woman. Here is a far more feminist Joyce than the standard biography suggests, and if he tended to polarize male and female attributes, such as the "solar" male versus the "earthly" female, Joyce preferred the free-thinking woman. Gerty MacDowell, the pliant, dreamy, husband-hunting *puella aeterna* is laughable in *Ulysses*; less so is Molly, the adulterous *magna mater*.

"How life begins". Bloom's gentle thought on generative sex, unwittingly tags the notion that sexuality equals reproduction. Joyce revised for us the psychiatrists' catalogue of "perversions" into simple "versions" of human love. Like Balzac, Zola and Flaubert before him, then, Joyce was not only a social realist, but a social theorist.

Among the handful of dissertations that all Joyce textologists read, *An Anatomy of "Penelope"* is a 1964 microfilm classic, newly relevant and revised. James Van Dyck Card sifted through notes, drafts, typescripts and proofs to establish a critical text of the final episode of *Ulysses*. As often as not, Card retains what Joyce wrote and the 1922 edition printed, where the editors of the new Random House/Bodley Head *Ulysses* chose to overrule both. The present agitation over the computerized *Ulysses* will eventually calm down and many will acknowledge that Card has several better readings. Until textual bibliography reaches more Joyceans and Card's archival work can be evaluated, the impact of *An Anatomy* will come from the eighty pages on the composition, sources, and structures of "Penelope". On Molly's language and her "contradictions", Card is indisputable.

The wheel of explication, source-finding and re-explication takes another turn in *Children's Lore in "Finnegans Wake"*. By lore, Grace Eckley means everything children know – riddles, fairy-tales, song, literature, schooltexts, letters, gossip, dreams. Some genuine discoveries rumple the landscape, such as the parallel of HCE's "sin" and the "crime" of William T. Stead, the Victorian anti-pornographer who was jailed for hiring a juvenile prostitute in order to publicize the plight of girls enslaved in London's brothels. But Eckley's quirky associations unravel in all directions. For example, the Tarot as redesigned by Aleister Crowley is adduced as evidence, though *The Book of Thoth* was published after Joyce's death. The Marseilles and Rider-Waite Tarot decks, which Joyce probably knew, are never mentioned. Joyce may have intended 90 per cent of what Eckley unearthed, and her researches add a great mass of – perhaps overwhelming – detail. Now it remains for someone to make a chart of it all.

Foreigners have one advantage over readers of a native literature: "they know that the language is strange and has to be looked at very closely", as Fritz Senn puts the paradox in *Joyce's Dislocations: Essays on reading as translation*. In coining "dislocation" for the unruly insinuations of all language, Senn gives a name to those inborn ambiguities, often unintended, that make all expression imperfect and imperfectible. "We are all foreigners in a labyrinth", Senn writes, because none is a speaker of Djoytsch. An essay on the Ovidian epigraph to *A Portrait of the Artist* winnows its readers into classes – Latinists and others. "Applying his mind to obscure arts", one version of the line from the *Metamorphoses*, is a comment on Ovid's Daedalus, and Joyce's presentation of the self. The reader, too, confronts Joyce's obscurity. The reader of a reader of Joyce is triply obscured. Translation is not merely a trope here, since three essays are about foreign versions of the works. Having collaborated on the German translation of *Ulysses*, Senn still argues for the untranslatability of literary language. Although not by nature combative, he loses some arrows against "dogmatic" interpreters. To the dogma-mad who claim to have definitively decoded this or that Joycean signal, Senn holds up the works themselves, engraved in the language of the outlaw.

Since 1967 the James Joyce Foundation has sponsored biennial symposia which now span a week, draw hundreds of professional specialists for panels, lectures and performances of music, drama and film. Dublin, Trieste, Paris, Zurich and Frankfurt have been visited, and



This photograph of James Joyce with Herbert Gorman and Nora Joyce (Fontainebleau, 1935) is reproduced from the catalogue of James Joyce 1882-1914: a centenary exhibit by Richard F. Peterson, Alan M. Collin and Shelley Cox (55pp. Friends of Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois).

Copenhagen is recovering from Bloomsweek '86. Alternating with the major meetings in Europe are smaller but still crowded American events in odd-numbered years. The most cohesive volume to emerge from these convenings is *Joyce in Rome: The genesis of "Ulysses"*. Joyce's 1906 letter from Rome, mentioning a planned story for *Dubliners* about a cuckolded Jew named Hunter, justifies this Roman claim to paternity of *Ulysses*. The editor, Giorgio Melchiori, also asserts that "the Roman period of James Joyce was in some ways the most fruitful in the whole of his intellectual life". The archival photographs and maps transform this into an end-table book.

In eight months of ten-hour workdays as a correspondence clerk in a private bank, Joyce immersed himself in Italian socialism, reading the daily *Avanti!* and the anti-clerical *L'Asino*, as well as Ferrero's histories of Europe and the Roman empire. Interlocking essays by ten hands sketch the Roman profile of the "Esule volontario", as the plaque at via Frattina 52 reads. The distinction between a self-propelled exile and one hounded out is important. Much as he loathed the two masters of Ireland, the King and the Pope, Joyce willingly crept into the Roman Church's municipal bosom, the better to take the pulse of the mistress he would not serve. He had few friends in Rome. *Joyce in Rome* proves that he saw more with his nose pressed to the glass than if he had joined the party within. What he saw and read of in Rome – socialism, clerical pomp, nar-

chistic bombings, antisemitism – were pumped into all the fiction from "The Dead" onwards.

When Jacques Aubert devotes nine pages to the first word of *Finnegans Wake*, announcing in advance that the word is "unreadable" and "impenetrable", some will wrongly suspect a hoax. All suspicious persons should turn back to Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer's introduction to *Post-Structuralist Joyce* and start again. The doubter who pays attention without skipping will read on page 11: "The power of the Joycean text is such that it tends to lead its perceptive and unprejudiced readers, whatever their theoretical backgrounds, to similar procedures of reading." The French have spent more time thinking about the rules of the reading game than have the Americans, who play best at source-seeking, mapping and cataloguing. Jacques Derrida, a philosopher of the language game who may be adding a few rules of his own, is more ambitious than Aubert, who is content to analyse "river-run". Derrida wrestles with two words, not just one, and confesses that "every time I write, and even in the most academic piece of work, Joyce's ghost is always coming on board". Jean-Michel Rabaté justifies critical pluralism by calling *Finnegans Wake* a "word-machine". As long as there is energy (ie, the reader's attention) to run the machine, Joyce's creation will go on expanding. Rabaté's even more evocative image is of a language-organism: "Writing has no sooner begun than it inseminates itself with another reading."

That side idolatry

Mark Mortimer

BERNARD BENSTOCK
James Joyce
 202pp. Lorrimer. £7.95 (paperback, £4.95).
 08044 20475

In an informative post-face to this book, Bernard Benstock says: "to date there are over a hundred books on Joyce" and "well over a thousand articles in various scholarly journals"; one's first reaction to the appearance of Benstock's *Joyce* is one of resignation, quickly mitigated by the knowledge that the author is one of the outstanding authorities on Joyce in the world today. This little book, a general introduction in the Literature and Life series, is likely to consolidate his reputation as an illuminating, perceptive critic.

The first section, with its biblical title "In the Beginning", discusses the political, social and cultural background against which Joyce grew up and started to write; and is informative and revealing. "The Road to Dublin" suffers from hopping about in its treatment of the stories in *Dubliners*, while "The Book of Himself" tells us little that is new about *A Portrait*. In both

these chapters the substituting seems superfluous. In dealing with *Exiles* – Joyce's one work for the theatre – Benstock has perhaps allowed his idolatry of the master to blind him to the defects of a very dull play.

We turn to the later works with relief; and it is here that the author strikes gold. *Ulysses* comes alive, in "The Dublin Odyssey", through a mixture of well-chosen quotation and perceptive comment; even the experienced reader can learn much here. The chapter on *Finnegans Wake* – well documented, witty and wise – is a strong inducement to return to a book that makes few concessions in style and content, and try again.

But the old nagging questions return. Joyce is essentially a great comic writer, in the tradition of Cervantes and Molière; why do his critics play down, or ignore altogether, the laughter that pervades his work? Benstock obviously not without humour; but the only moment of Joycean mirth occurs in the chronology when Stanislaus Joyce is interred forty years before his death. Benstock is the least pedantic of guides, however, and his short book – carefully planned, cogently argued and elegantly written – will send the reader back to the originals with a sharpened appetite.

To the edge of the universe

John Gould

H. A. MASON
The Tragic Plane
 197pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
 0198128436

"In the effective possession of the end of a tragedy we are totally enclosed in a moment. It is like coming to the edge of the universe. There is nowhere to go for further enlightenment or explanation." "Big words", to quote H. A. Mason writing of George Santayana in *The Tragic Plane*, but his new book is one that calls for big words if it is to match the largeness of its subject, and Mason is not scared of them. His quarry is the nature of tragedy and it would have been all too easy to have been disastrously reminded of Ronald Searle's cartoon from "The Private Life of the Gerund": "Kennedy discovers the gerund and brings it back into captivity". Mason plots a rigorous argument in pursuit of the tragic which ruthlessly (and rightly) discards much familiar clutter. The clutter includes many old favourites, such as tragedy defined by its origins, psychology and "character" as distinctive of the greatest tragedies, tragic flaws, poetic justice, fate and determinism: they are all, as Mason argues, substitutes for the real thing and it is good to see them go. But at this point one notices, not for the first time, that they

should have gone long since and one wonders even now whether one is quite done with them. Mason brings to bear against them such powerful guns as Goethe and Samuel Johnson, but as any reader of undergraduate essays knows, the critical graveyard gives up its dead all too readily and "tragic flaws" and the "workings of fate" still ride the battlefield of the exam script. It might seem that the central question of Mason's field of enquiry should have been "why do these ghosts return to haunt us?", but that is a question to which he provides only the most oblique of answers.

However, the complaint is churlish. What Mason does give us is a precise and convincing argument which seeks at every turn to discriminate between true and false claimants to the grand rank of tragedy. Starting from "the hypothesis that the world's best tragedies could be approximated by the nature of our response to them" (an eminently Aristotelian hypothesis), he finds the heart of the matter in ambiguity of a certain sort, in resistance to a rigorous argument in pursuit of the tragic which ruthlessly (and rightly) discards much familiar clutter. The clutter includes many old favourites, such as tragedy defined by its origins, psychology and "character" as distinctive of the greatest tragedies, tragic flaws, poetic justice, fate and determinism: they are all, as Mason argues, substitutes for the real thing and it is good to see them go. But at this point one notices, not for the first time, that they

Allusions of grandeur

C. H. Sisson

JASPER GRIFFIN
The Mirror of Myth: Classical themes and variations
 144pp. Faber. £15.
 0571 138055

"The subject of the 1984 T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures is", as the publisher puts it, "the vitality and versatility of myth in classical and modern literature and art." *How* myth is used in poetry could be matter for endless inquiry; its importance could hardly be held to be in doubt. Classical literature is unthinkable without it, and the same must be true of "modern literature" except where that phrase is used in an attenuated sense as meaning the mass of writing – most of it evidently bad or indifferent – which has surfaced in the past few decades.

Jasper Griffin sets at the head of his lectures five "representative quotations" – two from Eliot, two from Larkin and one from Yeats – which express "two opposed attitudes to the use of past literature, in particular the literature of Greece and Rome". The symptomatic "modern" quotations are from Larkin, with his innocent plea for "the poet's duty to be original" and the rather silly phrase about "every poem" being "its own freshly created universe". Behind this there lies a historic system of confusions, widely diffused in our own day, about "the individual" and his or her "experience", and what Larkin calls the "prime responsibility . . . to the experience itself", – a conception which since the war has run riot in thousands of ill-made lines of verse. Larkin himself confessed – "boasted" would perhaps convey the sense better – that to him "the whole of the ancient world, the whole of classical and biblical mythology, means very little." Whatever this ineptitude may do to a poet, it is certainly a disqualification in a reader, for all the best poets are after all dead and they were all more or less caught in these trammels.

"Ancient themes and variations: the subject is", as Griffin says, "an inexhaustible one." The whole of human conversation does not amount to much more, and whether more emphasis is put on the themes or on the variations is largely a matter of the state of polemical or popular – in a particular age, Romantic poets pour out their souls and then Robert Currius comes along to announce that most modern lyrical themes, out of "the poet's experience", are to be found in late antiquity as themes of rhetorical exercises. There is no escaping the historical past, or the habits of languages and cultures, and gods and

goddesses and other manifestations of mythology are no more than readily identifiable vestiges of a wider pattern. The real question is how much of the past can be carried into the future, and how much and what sort of novelty can be incorporated with it; the actual count of mythological figures is a subsidiary matter. There are good reasons for the decline in the use of classical references in the present century, but of course this does not mean that a poet who can make the necessary connections, and finds them interesting enough, cannot use them still. Writers should not imagine – any more than readers – that their performance will be the worse for a little literacy, which of course involves some knowledge of the Christian faith as well as of the classical past.

Griffin says that "myths are not just stories but stories of guaranteed importance". Precisely, and the guarantee is given by time. The stories are of *enduring* interest – the only guarantee, also, of the importance of literature. "The human persons who appear in them", the lecturer goes on, "possess a special status, not only because they are familiar but because they are exemplary, because they illustrate and explain something about the order of the world and the relationship of gods and men." Or of God and men, or of men and women with one another and with the world they inhabit. It is because the *Aeneid* is packed with such matter that it is the weightiest Latin poem we have. The presence of classical or Christian allusion in a modern poem is certainly not in itself meritorious, though Griffin seems at one point to suggest that somehow a reference to Oedipus gives sudden strength to some rather shoddy lines of Sylvia Plath. A touch of the classics does not make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and even with the highly gifted Yeats – for Griffin "the greatest poet of the twentieth century" – mythological allusions tend rather to throw into relief his frequent touches of humbug, than to conceal them. Griffin appears at times to be concerned with themes to a degree which makes his literary judgment look uncertain. What is one to make of such a sentence as: "The tragedies of Voltaire were a model for their time of high diction, yet the true tragic experience is not evoked in them?" Perhaps the genius of Voltaire lay elsewhere and he was giving himself airs when he pretended to "high diction"? Or what is implied by this: "The greatness of the *Aeneid* as a moral achievement, disregarding for a moment its poetical beauties . . ." Is the moral achievement not in fact the poetical achievement and nowhere else?

In his first paragraph Griffin proposes to set about his task "on the principle of Little Jack Horner". He has in fact done exactly this.

tragic), and who are "banded" to others by social ties of a deep, even primitive nature: Oedipus and Antigone are favoured examples, but (and the "but" is of the essence) the Oedipus and Antigone of Sophocles, not those of "the myth", nor of other dramatists. With precise and just discrimination Mason rejects the fictional worlds of Cocteau's *La Machine infernale* and Anouilh's *Antigone* as false claimants to the status of tragedy.

The essential ambiguity of tragedy is embodied in the tragic act which must both involve a co-presence of guilt and innocence that is "logically contradictory" and he achieved in an ending that defies "daylight" experience, for "how can we believe in the reality of an end which nothing can follow, when we know that life never produces an end?" The tragic act is illustrated from *Macbeth* and from Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, but the notion of an end is not so easily exemplified. Indeed Mason finds the tragic not so much in the closure of an ending as in the sudden supervening of some new dimension, in moments such as the sleepwalking scene or in Cassandra's visions in *Agamemnon*, and in the sense of *difference* that such moments bring with them. As to the nature of the difference, Mason offers us a Forsterian phrase: such moments "reach back", and if we ask, "back to what?", he is not afraid to say "to something primitive", to what he terms "blood-thinking", "Aphrodite" and the "Eriyns" are "not local discoveries of a small Aegean community but plausible figures in a timeless universe"; "what moves us profoundly in the plays is the emergence to the surface of fears and joys which might be called primitive at first sight but are seen on reflection to be the human normality buried like coal in the deepest seams of race history".

I am not too happy with "blood" and "race" but I have quoted enough to make the point that this is work of unusual seriousness and unusual distinction, and that Mason makes, and largely sustains, large claims for the tragic experience. His book contains a host of discriminations beautifully made, such as his fine comparison between the true (but untragic) pathos of the mad Ophelia and the distinctively tragic pathos of Cassandra in *Trojan Women*, or his telling juxtaposition of John the Baptist's "conviction that there is a world of the spirit which he can affirm but not see" with the tragic affirmation of the same conviction in *Antigone*. What is essentially tragic about Antigone is not that she is wrong but that she *cannot* know whether she is right or wrong: "Sophocles' play . . . would cease to be a tragedy if we treated the heroine's words as we do those of John the Baptist . . . as standards of unquestionable truth."

There are other things, too, I find off-putting and disconcerting in Mason's book; above all,

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Olivia Manning (1908-1980): letters, information, anecdotes, for the authorized biography. Neville Braybrooke, Isobel English. 10 Gardiner Road, London NW3 1HA.

Arthur Szyk, artist, who lived in London, 1937-40: any information about his career and the location of original works; for a book.

Joseph P. Ansell. University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, USA.

Wales and the Welsh: references in the work of non-Welsh writers; for a dictionary of quotations.

M. Stephens. 42 Church Road, Whitechurch, Cardiff.

Russell Page, garden designer: any papers, plans or photographs relating to his designs; for a biography.

Paul Miles. Castlemaine, Ufford Place, Ufford, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6DR.

British New Towns: for a feasibility study about a possible history of the British New Towns; any views or suggestions, particularly those with first-hand experience of the towns.

Danys J. Hinton. 45 Park Hill, Moseley, Birmingham B13 8DR.

the coexistence of appropriately tough argument (appropriate, that is, to the attempt to prise free the answer to an extremely tough question) with a paradoxical and disturbing softness and self-indulgence in the writing. He is by turns self-deprecating and despondent of his success in arriving at an answer to his question, by turns almost compulsively autobiographical, so that at the same time as following an argument of selfless rigour, we read also the record of H. A. Mason's personal search for tragic reality, through all its detours and false trails. But the oddity of the personal intrusions cannot blind us to the major successes of a critic of the finest sensitivity scrupulously attending to an inquiry of the utmost weight and seriousness. This is a book to feed the mind and to encourage our faltering attempts to confront the real. Perhaps in the end it is the fact that "human kind cannot bear very much reality" that both makes for the oddities of Mason's own quest and explains the prevalence of unkind ghosts on the critical field.

What calls for explanation is the extent to which tragic misapprehensions, particularly those which derive from misreadings of Aristotle, continually feed back into the tradition, not just into critical writing on tragedy but even into the creative tradition itself, as witness not merely Cocteau and Anouilh but perhaps even the greatest, Racine and Shakespeare. It is not, surely, that Aristotle's text is peculiarly open to misreading (though that is true), but that the deeply rooted desire for comfort and reassurance, for system and order with which to confront chaos, finds its acceptable expression in such evasions. To return to Santayana: he gives us a contrast between some of "the greatest poets" (to wit, Homer and Dante), who present a world in which "the fragments of experience have fallen together into a perfect picture, like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope", such that "no chaos remains beyond", and Shakespeare himself, in whom "life" is "without a setting, and consequently without a meaning", a senselessness expressed for Santayana in Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech. But the contrast is false, false both to Homer and to Shakespeare, if not to Dante: as Mason says, Santayana "has failed, and failed totally, to understand what makes for tragedy in the best plays of the Greeks and of Shakespeare".

But the failure is exemplary: either the reassurance of an order or a world-weary senselessness that is itself an evasion. Tragedy offers us the jolt that opens up "chaos in order", the "antiquated and primitive" view which is the view from "the edge of the universe". It is the pain of that view that produces the anodynes of criticism and of the false pretenders to the tragic vision.

Revd Henry Crispe and Laurence Eusden: extant copy sought of the catalogue of their libraries, published 1763 by Lockyer Davis and Charles Reymers.

Helene Solheim. 1025 134th Avenue NE, Bellevue, Washington 98005, USA.

Revd Nelson Ward, grandson of Admiral Lord Nelson and incumbent of Radstock, Somerset, 1833-88; contact sought with any descendants; for research purposes.

R. J. Charles Chilcott. Radstock, Midsomer Norton and District Museum Society, St Edmunds Farmhouse, Vobster, Somerset BA3 5RJ.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, poet (1878-1962): any letters, MSS, etc in private hands, also personal recollections; for a biographical and critical study.

R. H. Hogg. 12 Brainside Gardens, Kenton, Newcastle upon Tyne 3.

Bruce Rogers: any letters or memorabilia; for a book concerning Rogers's stay in England, 1916-19, with particular reference to his edition of Dürer's *Just Shaping of Letters*.

Patrick McGuire. 47 Duncan Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey 07304, USA.

Part of the story

M. S. Anderson

PAUL DUKES
A History of Europe 1648-1948: The arrival,
the rise, the fall
552pp. Macmillan. £30 (paperback, £8.95).
0333 281047

This book is an ambitious effort to present in a relatively limited space (a little over 500 pages of fairly large print) a bird's-eye view of the major lines of development in European history over a period of three centuries. Paul Dukes divides his subject-matter chronologically into three sections: 1648-1789 sees what he calls the "arrival" of Europe (a somewhat question-begging phrase); 1789-1914 its rise; and 1914-48 its fall, the age when, weakened by two devastating civil wars, it had to yield world leadership to its transatlantic outlier, the United States, and its Eurasian one, the Soviet Union. The potential scope of the book is therefore very wide.

However, the author has chosen drastically to limit it by excluding all but the most cursory discussion of economic, social or intellectual history. This is essentially a narrative of political events, both within the major European

states and on the international level. In terms of practicalities this self-denial is understandable. To cover every major aspect of European history over this period would have made the book either much longer than it is or a different sort of book, an interpretative essay rather than a predominantly factual narrative. But limitations so drastic leave the reader, inevitably, with a marked feeling of incompleteness. Europe's world leadership, after all, was very much more than a political phenomenon: trade, industry, technology and a great and complex flow of ideas to the non-European world were all fundamental to it. Dukes is well aware of this. He makes a series of gestures towards those large aspects of the story, but these merely underline the need for a fuller treatment.

Ideas and intellectual history in particular suffer from a discussion which often seems one-sided and unbalanced. There are, for example, several pages on this aspect of the second half of the seventeenth century, a period during which Europe assembled a store of new and fundamental ideas on which, to a considerable extent, the world is still living; but these pages are centred almost entirely on Hobbes, while Newton receives a bare paragraph and the Cartesian legacy is almost en-

tirely neglected. It is frustrating, too, to see the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and its immediate results, dismissed in little over a page.

The scanty attention given to economic developments also underlies another aspect of the book which makes it seem somewhat old-fashioned. This is its almost complete lack of any quantitative element. Throughout there is a marked absence of figures and a failure to attempt quantitative explanations or comparisons. The ebb and flow of power between Europe and the rest of the world, or between different European states, is very hard to discuss convincingly without some idea of how populations, material wealth and production, trade or military strength varied over time.

Sometimes Dukes shows originality in his choice of materials. It is interesting to see the diary of Patrick Gordon used to illustrate aspects of the relations between eastern and western Europe in the second half of the seventeenth century (a full scholarly edition of this diary would be one of the most valuable of all contributions to the study of the seventeenth-century Europe), or the *cahier* of the Third Estate of Rouen used to throw light on the situation in France before 1789, or Baedeker guides quoted extensively to add circumstantial detail to a picture of Europe in the

years before 1914. But there is marked unevenness in the attention given to different political events and forces; and this sometimes gives an impression of lack of balance and of haste in writing. What is said about the growth of socialism in the nineteenth century, for example, is not much more than a summary of the *Communist Manifesto*, while Saint-Simon is dismissed in two lines and Proudhon does not seem to be mentioned at all. At the other end of the political spectrum the growth in the later decades of the century of various forms of mass conservatism, one of the most interesting and far-reaching developments of the period, is alluded to only in one rather vague paragraph.

Any author who attempts what Dr Dukes has is inevitably presenting a large and tempting target to critics; and it would be unfair to blame him for not doing the impossible. Even within his self-imposed limits his subject is so large that the fully comprehensive coverage, the perfect balance, are unattainable. There is much information here, though also a number of factual slips. The writing is clear, apart from the occasional vagueness, which is probably the product of limitations of space, and there are some neat turns of phrase. But a little more ambition and width of view would have produced a more interesting book.

Metropolitan loyalties

Alan Sykes

MICHAEL W. DOYLE
Empires
407pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
\$16.45.
080149334X

Comparative history is necessarily forced into precise definitions and heavily structured arguments to provide a framework of reference within which comparisons can be made. *Empires*, an extended exercise in classification, is no exception. Almost inevitably, it is less about empire than about theories of imperialism. The language is fairly technical, but there are some fine touches of humour. Ranging from the Athenian empire to the nineteenth century, Michael W. Doyle attempts to construct a historical sociology of empires that will encompass imperialism's infinite variety. The result, if it remains unconvincing, is nevertheless entertaining, and provocative.

The basic theme is the fourfold interaction between "metropole" (imperial power), its transnational extensions (here most frequently trade, but including missionaries, soldiers, etc), the periphery (colonies), and the international system. Metropoles are powerful because they have a centralized state, social differentiation (a developed economy) and communal identity, but differ from other mere powerful states ("hegemons") by their transnational extensions, which lead them to acquire empires. Peripheries, either tribal or patrimonial (feudal), are weak because they lack one or more of the characteristics which make metropoles strong, and are subordinated to protect metropolitan interests either by formal rule, if tribal, or informal, if patrimonial. The nature, pace and extent of both metropolitan imperialism and peripheral subordination are conditioned by the international system, bipolar systems tending to informal rule, multipolar systems to formal rule. Empires survive their initial expansion only if they develop authoritarian imperial bureaucracies ("the Augustan threshold"). Empire and liberty are thus necessarily opposed.

Doyle is, of course, more cautious and more sophisticated than this, although not always to advantage. His long discussions of the political roles of peripheral weakness obscure such basic points as size and lack of resources. The overall argument, however, integrating metropolitan, pericentric and systemic theories which Doyle considers inadequate, has a persuasive simplicity and symmetry.

Problems arise from the definitions which underpin this argument. "Empire", according to Doyle, is simply the control by one society of the effective sovereignty of another. But here logic swiftly conflicts with common sense. Athens massacred or enslaved the inhabitants of defeated states, but since there was then

only one society left, the definition is not met, and Athens did not "imperialize" Melos when Caracalla extended Roman citizenship to the entire empire, metropole and periphery became one society, and the Roman Empire ceased to exist. This is absurd, as are the limitations imposed by the restriction of empire solely to political control. Two-thirds of this book is nominally devoted to nineteenth-century empires, but in practice this means little more than the Scramble for Africa.

There is, however, more to the Scramble than international rivalries, metropolitan exploitation and annexation, and disrupted native societies. White highland settlement in Africa was sufficiently important to contemporaries for Milner to theorize, and John Buchan to moralize, about it, but white settlement in Africa, and indeed all the British white settlement dominions, are excluded by Doyle because metropolitan control was too weak for there to be a proper imperial relationship. The British Empire is thus unrecognizable. Moreover, while the discussion of mid-Victorian imperialism is good, the book peters out towards the end of the century, ignoring both the new aggressive ideologies of empire that emerged under the impact of racial beliefs, and the later transition from Empire to Commonwealth. It remains unclear whether Britain ever crossed the "Augustan threshold" into imperial bureaucracy.

Empires transported metropolitan values and institutions to the periphery, and created dual, divided, but not necessarily incompatible loyalties. Alfred Deakin was thus simultaneously the embodiment of Australian nationalism and the great white hope of imperial federation. Nor was the extension of metropolitan culture restricted to the white dominions. C. L. R. James's reminiscences illustrate how successfully the values enshrined in a metropolitan school system, literature and sport could cross racial frontiers even in an empire acutely conscious of ethnic differences. Empires developed an autonomous existence by assimilation of common values and civilization that both transcended and outlasted the formal institutional structure. The problem of imperial survival was not simply a question of perpetuating control by institutionalizing it in a bureaucracy, but how to reconcile these potentially divergent loyalties. Doyle's empires are, in contrast, sterile.

Empires is an excellent introduction to current theories of imperialism, and an interesting attempt at a new synthesis. Doyle recognizes the diversity of empires and imperial motivation, the French "civilizing mission", Spanish Catholicism and, implicitly, British "Christianity", but these are never integrated into his main thesis. Ultimately, too much is sacrificed to a narrow definition and a particular argument for this to be a satisfactory study of empires as they really were.

Behind closed doors

Brian Stock

PHILIPPE ARIÈS and GEORGES DUBY (Editors)
Histoire de la vie privée
Volume One: De l'Empire romain à l'an mil
635pp.
Volume Two: De l'Europe féodale à la Renaissance. 638pp.
Paris: Seuil. 350 fr each.
202 0089920
PHILIPPE ARIÈS
Le Temps de l'histoire
256pp. Paris: Seuil. 89 fr.
202 0090880

In 1981, at the twelfth-century Cistercian abbey of Sénanque in southern France, a group of scholars agreed to pool their intellectual resources and to collaborate on the first systematic history of the private sphere of life in the West under the direction of Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby. Ariès died in 1984, and these volumes (of which there are to be five in all) are a fitting memorial to a distinguished pioneer, one of the first among contemporary historians, as Duby notes in an elegant introduction, "to penetrate the apparently impenetrable sectors . . . of childhood, the life of the family, and death". Roger Chartier, the editor of the forthcoming third volume of *Histoire de la vie privée*, has also written an informative preface to the re-issue of Ariès's neglected but important study of 1954, *Le Temps de l'histoire*. He reminds us that Ariès was among a handful of post-war French historians who effectively mediated between the radical novelty of *Annales* and an entrenched profession's more conservative spokesmen. He was conscious of such forces as custom and tradition, but he also spoke of a subtle intermingling of the material, the affective, and the imaginative in the creation of *structures mentales*.

One of the chief difficulties in writing a history of privacy lies in defining what the private life is. Is it the domain of activity which, by legal definition, is opposed to the public? Or, to move to the other extreme, is it everything that takes place within the private existence of the individual, the couple, or the family—birth, marriage, death, and the sorts of boundaries which are set up between the different departments of life along the way? Or is the private life, as Freud suggested, much more of a subjective affair, and the external divisions of our lives—our notions of work and leisure, or the manner in which we organize our living space—only the reflection of a deeper, inner reality?

The contributors to these volumes wisely do not adopt an arbitrary notion of the private life. But, reading through this impressive set of essays, one gradually becomes aware that two conceptual frameworks are being used. One operates within the varied sources, and tells us that the private life is nothing more or less than what successive periods of history have made of it. The other framework can best be observed in Volume Two which, unlike Volume One, does not proceed chronologically but through a combination of chronology and thematics, moving in turn from an "overview" to a series of "tableaux", then to "fictions", and finally to "problèmes", thereby progressively engaging contemporary French historiography in a debate over priorities. The price paid for this sort of approach, Duby acknowledges, is high, but the results are eminently worthwhile. True, we hear nothing of England or Spain, whose later medieval archives are so rich in details of a personal nature, and little or nothing of Jewish life in Provence, which some of Duby's own students have recently resuscitated. But, in return for such omissions, we have a cumulative history in two senses: one which not only tells an important story but which also stands back from time to time and tries to analyse the sort of story it is trying to tell.

Volume One deals with the greater diversity of societies and cultures, as it takes into account the destiny of the Roman empire in both West and East. It is fortunate in starting off with a splendid essay by Paul Veyne, which, in its length and breadth of interests, is a virtual monograph in itself. As one would expect from the author of *Le Pain étié* (1976), a book which laid the historical sociology of political

pluralism", the axis of Veyne's account is the relationship of the gift—in technical language *l'évergétisme*—to the social and political life of imperial towns. Veyne moves outward from the notion of exchange to central institutions of Roman society in its prime—childhood, marriage, slavery, and above all patrimony, as well as forms of censure, leisure and escapism. The style is lively and occasionally pugnacious, especially when he rightly questions popular misconceptions of Roman life. He reminds us that, for the upper echelons of this rich, brutal and success-oriented society, "la voix du sang parlait très peu . . . ; ce qui parlait plus haut était la voix du nom de famille".

Veyne urges us to look upon archaic Rome not as a group of clans, each worshipping a different ancestor, but as the natural predecessor of the imperial city, in which the real tyrant was the head of the nuclear family, who was at once a husband, the sole owner of an estate, and the ultimate law-maker in a vast, ill-defined region lying between the private and the public domain. It was a world in which unwanted children were abandoned, bastards unacknowledged, and in which a legitimate son did not attain his full legal rights until his father's death. The ultimate family law-maker could (in theory at least) sentence his own heir to death. There are some brilliant pages on the rituals which accompanied the steady stream of clients, protégés and bribed officials into a noble household each morning, and on the close links between *puissance sociale* and *pouvoir politique* in assigning honorific roles in public and private life. Veyne also stresses the lack of clear boundaries between the personal and impersonal dimensions of politics: corruption, kickbacks, and a complex system of patronage operated everywhere in public life, and the real source of authority was not the state or law—two myths of modernism—but a combination of inherited privilege, the entrepreneurial spirit, and the subtle gestures of patrician education. The great public buildings were in fact private monuments, acts of controlled ostentation in which civic devotion was the price one paid for perpetuating "une époque de stabilité nobiliaire".

But the values of this world were soon to undergo profound changes, and it is to these that Peter Brown turns in a perceptive account of the development of Christianity in public and private life in the later empire. For Christianity, as Yvon Thébert points out in a chapter on the villas of Roman Africa, was not chiefly recognizable as a way of life from its external, domestic relations. It arose from within. Brown's canvas is his favourite one, the creative world that took shape between the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the second century and the death of Justinian in 565. Unlike Veyne, he does not take as his point of departure the socio-historical axis of the individual and the family. Instead, he focuses on one of the enduring challenges to the study of later ancient and early medieval society: how the sense of the person, the family and the body changed at a time when the social context of the private life was modified from top to bottom with the rise of new forms of communal life. In Brown's view, this neglected history is not so much a question of interdependencies between "la vie quotidienne" and "sentiments religieux", but rather an excavating of a "new morality" in the sense in which the issues were understood over a century ago by William Lecky.

One of the most innovative features of Brown's essay comes from his description of the role of sexuality in the moral transformation of later antiquity. With an eye for significant detail and an unrivalled knowledge of the larger picture, he goes far towards correcting and completing the sketch of ancient sexuality left before his untimely death by Michel Foucault. He rightly sees the origin of the whole matter in the doctrine of simplicity of heart which was invented in Judaism and eventually implanted in the pagan world by the early Christian communities. This was, as Brown says, a different model of the person. The Jews saw in the "heart" the source of motivation, reflection and commitment. A true heart was one that lay open to the will of God and the spiritual needs of the group. Any conflict between inner and outer, any excess of intimacy or privacy, was looked upon as a threat, the divided heart, and the resulting

plurality of spirit, could only "crack" the unity of the Jewish and later the Christian sense of purpose. It was not an ideal suited to the upper echelons of society but to "the socially vulnerable" who lived at a more modest level: for only a man who could be wounded by sexual infidelity would be concerned with austerity, obedience and discipline. From such roots sprang Christian attitudes towards divorce and celibacy, as well as new values associated with poverty and mutual aid.

With the gradual erosion of the imperial administration and the permanent separation of the empires, the private life began to assume different roles in the Greek East and the Latin West. In the East, the story is essentially one of continuity and development, as it is on a more modest scale in a few Western Mediterranean towns and in France south of the Loire. In the West, the entire context was irrevocably altered by the Germanic invasions. In comparison with Greek and Roman antiquity, the novelty was the almost complete effacement of the sphere of public law and its absorption into

Byzantium in the able account of Evelynne Pullagien.

It would be centuries before the West would know such refinement, but as early as the eleventh century it was clear that a new set of social conventions was already struggling to appear. They looked backward self-consciously to the Carolingian age, and, despite the renaissance of a traditional vocabulary, forward essentially into the unknown.

Duby appropriately begins Volume Two with a useful summary of the nascent legal terminology for the public and the private in the later Middle Ages and with a brief but illuminating discussion of the relationship between the concepts of feudalism and private power. In so doing he effectively recapitulates the historiography of feudalism, which began in legal antiquarianism and finally graduated to mature social history between the wars. He also inaugurates the dialogue to which I referred earlier between the past and the present of French historical writing on medieval life. In the contributions of Duby and of Dominique Barthélemy, which sit side by side and are intended to complement each other, we witness not two but three generations of conceptualization that of Marc Bloch, which stands behind both, that of Duby, who is the major figure in the evolution of Bloch's ideas in our time, and that of the younger generation, whose trade-mark, if Barthélemy is representative, is a precise anthropology and a renewed interest in narrative sources for the writing of history.

Duby is responsible for much of the current thinking about the rural aristocracy in medieval France. It is very much to his credit that neither of the remarkable syntheses which he contributes to Volume Two consists merely of ideas which he has presented to the public elsewhere. The earlier comprises an outline of the major types of secular and religious households and of the roles, functions and mental worlds of their respective inhabitants. Moving skilfully through a wide range of sources—from archaeology to legal records and to art and literature—he argues convincingly that there were not only two medieval societies, the secular and the religious, but that each had a material and a spiritual side.

In the later essay he takes us into the much-debated realm of individualism, which has troubled medievalists since the time of Burckhardt. Here, his approach is deliberately more suggestive, but, once again, he achieves outstanding insights through his insistence on seeing the secular and religious interpretations of individuality as part of a single society. So granular was feudal society, he proposes, so compacted of small units, that the individual naturally sought a refuge, a real or imaginary retreat, from the oppressive, omnipresent "conviviality" which passed for privacy. But, in doing so, he laid himself open to both admiration and suspicion: he could be looked upon as either a rebel or a hero; in either case, he was classified as "foreign", and thereby placed outside the intense world of "privacy".

In prose as distinguished as his insights, Duby prepares the way for the considerable essays of Barthélemy, Danielle Régnier-Böhler and Charles de la Roncière, which deal respectively with the nobility of northern France, the private life in Old French literature, and the rich array of intimate relations to be found in Tuscany on the eve of the Renaissance. Barthélemy's major concern is what K. F. Werner has aptly called "the grammar of kin relations". He shows an exemplary sensitivity in applying anthropological terms to a wide variety of family situations, whether in speaking of youth or marriage, in dissecting Orderic Vitalis's portrait of the Gire of Normandy, or in taking us inside the bonds of kin and spiritual loyalties of the *Chanson de Roland*.

Régnier-Böhler provides the most extensive treatment of a literary theme in the two volumes. Her essay is an exploration of the private spaces of fiction in Old French, involving such important topics as the senses, family relations in literature, and the subjective sense of time in personal narratives. In passing from these two sections (which I have placed out of order) to that of de la Roncière on Tuscany, one is struck by the sudden flood of documentation on every aspect of the private life: it



A statue-column of a king, at present in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Its provenance prior to the eighteenth century is uncertain but it has been identified (by Vera Ostoia in 1955) with one of the kings in the *Saint-Denis* Chloster as represented in one of the drawings in Monfaucon's *Les Monuments*. It is reproduced here from Abbot Sugier and Saint-Denis: A Symposium, edited by Paula Lieber Gerson (304pp. Metropolitan Museum of Art, \$35.00 87099 4085), which will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

a group of institutions which historians of feudalism have perhaps too vaguely lumped together under the rubric of the private life. The parameters of this new, extensive, and entirely foreign type of privacy are vividly recreated by Michel Rouche. Many of the topics he touches upon have been the stuff of German and French historical writing on the "high Middle Ages" for over a century—magic and kingship, oral legal codes, personal notions of justice, an obsession with heirs and inheritance, the belief in the lineage as a form of social insurance, and the loyalty of aggressive, vengeful bands of warriors to a hardly less barbarous chief.

But this review of traditional themes is complemented by a panorama of Merovingian and Carolingian social history related to privacy, dealing with mundane matters like how people ate, bathed and clothed themselves, as well as the larger issues of love, marriage and mortality. I regretted a little that there was no comparison with the abundant material from early Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, in which so many customs and ideas from the Carolingian age are faithfully mirrored. Casting the net wider might also have provided a basis for comparing legal and social notions of privacy in West and East at a critical phase of evolution and helped to lessen the sense of distance one feels in turning from this violent world to the "civilized" towns and monasteries of

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A conservationist's bible

John Buxton

OLIVER RACKHAM
The History of the Countryside: The full fascinating story of Britain's landscape
445pp. Dent. £16.95.
0460044493

Oliver Rackham, whose books on British woodland have established a secure reputation for him as a scientific and sensitive observer of our landscape, here extends his survey to cover the entire countryside throughout the history of man's contact with it. He concludes that this has been more wasteful and destructive during the forty years since the Second World War than in the preceding millennia, not only through the agricultural chemical warfare of the 1950s and 1960s but through the unnecessary exploitation of vast acreages of arable and "improved" grassland for the production of surplus food.

So far as our countryside is concerned this process results in that uniform "imitation of a Turkish steppe in which wheat and barley are at home" which now covers so much of lowland England, to the impoverishment of the native flora and fauna. Twenty years ago more than 100,000 acres of chalk grassland survived, most of it in Wiltshire. Yet grassland in this area is ultimately a product of Neolithic farming, which began the removal of the wildwood. The wildwood, in turn, had taken over from semi-arctic grassland after the last glaciation. "When the trees moved in, grassland became very rare from about 10000 to 4000 B.C." Then Neolithic farmers began to clear the trees, and their sheep, by their close grazing, developed the downland sward. This has now been reduced to Turkish steppe by the barley barons; and a decrease in farmland is already announced for us. What then? Not, let us hope, more planting of Sitka spruce whose unsuitability for our climate, it has recently been suggested, has some responsibility for the new phenomenon of acid rain.

The History of the Countryside is a remarkable book: the author not only has a subtle appreciation of the varieties of the English countryside, field and fen, moorland, heath, hedgerows and highways, but a clear understanding of the historic process that has made them as they are. He draws on a large fund of learning and can use with ease the knowledge accumulated by geology, botany, zoology, archaeology (from mesolithic to industrial); the study of place-names; of Anglo-Saxon charters and medieval law-suits; and grave-stones in churchyards. One of his most unexpected estimates is that "the average English churchyard contains at least 10,000 bodies" whose phosphate is recycled in the nettles and

cow-parsley. He very properly rebukes those tidy-minded parish church councillors "who destroy the gravestones of their ancestors in order to mow the grass more often". He is equally critical of that urban regard for tidiness which has not much place in the countryside, and which can often be in conflict with conservation. A nest of swallows in a church porch, a roost of bats in the tower may be untidy, but . . . To Rackham "the landscape is a record of our roots and the growth of civilization". We destroy the principal source of our culture when we destroy something of our countryside.

This book is a conservationist's bible, an encyclopaedia of relevant facts presented in a challenging and persuasive manner – so persuasive, indeed, that once or twice I was almost



A dog fox in a hollow tree: Alan Beaumont's photograph is taken from A Fox's Tale by Robin Page (144pp. Hodder and Stoughton. 29.95. 0340382562).

led to accept something which, on reflection, I doubt. Maple in place-names, we are told, "is confined to the tree's present southerly distribution": there is a Mapleton and a Mapperley in Derbyshire. Yew is included among "general trees of farmland, hedges, and water-courses", which seems unlikely in view of its poisonous effect on cattle. (I had always supposed this was a reason for its often being confined within churchyard walls, as with those superb specimens at Cusop and Neven and many another churchyard. Their funeral associations derive from their being so placed, and are not a reason for it.) It is much better to learn from Dr Rackham where to find a pre-Roman hawthorn hedge, or that the earliest record of anyone planting a hedgerow was within five miles of Chippenham in Wiltshire, where I write this. He knows so much; and so much that anyone who cares for the English countryside must be eager to know.

Herpetofaunal facts

T. J. C. Beebee

TIM HALLIDAY and KRAIG ADLER (Editors)
The Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians
143pp. Allen and Unwin. £15.
0045000379

Tim Halliday and Kraig Adler have made the first serious attempt to tackle herpetology on a global scale within the confines of a single binder. First impressions of *The Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians* are dominated by the dazzling photography, which together with first-class line drawings in colour would be hard to better.

The text is split into twenty-one chapters contributed by nineteen herpetologists, including substantial contributions from the two editors. On the whole the subject-matter is well chosen; some titles are straightforward ("Lizards"), others less so ("Kaleidoscopic adaptation"), but all cover important aspects of herpetofauna biology. Particularly impressive are the guides to classification and distribution of all reptile and amphibian groups in the world. A useful addendum to this aspect of the book is a listing, for each group of animals, of the number of species and subspecies which are officially recognized as threatened with extinction.

Criticism is for the most part trivial; page

numbers are omitted wherever pictures or photographs intervene; the bibliography is not entirely accurate (it should be Townsend, not Townsend, in the captive breeding section); some of the terminology could have been explained a little more fully – I would like to know why "paedomorphosis" has replaced the more familiar "neotony", for example. I question the wisdom of including a chapter on dinosaurs, though the attraction to the publisher of descriptions of the most popular group of "herpetofauna" is clear. Since, however, they were not ancestral to living forms and may be less closely related to modern reptiles than to birds (and cannot in any case be adequately covered in two pages) it is hard to justify their inclusion. There are also a few features of amphibian and reptile life that have been rather scantily covered: there is little on skin moulting in amphibians; or on the significance of hybridization to the generation of new animals; such as seems to be happening with edible frogs in Europe; or on the nature of amphibian skin poisons (we are told how toxic they are, but not what they are). The latter would have made an interesting comparison with snake venoms, which are discussed in considerable detail.

Such objections, however, are in no way intended to detract from the book. *The Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians* is a magnificent contribution, a milestone in herpetological publication.

Minding their pees and cues

Mark Ridley

R. E. BROWN and D. W. MACDONALD (Editors)
Social Odours in Mammals
Two volumes. 882pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Volume One, £45; Volume Two £32.50
0198573467 and 019857617X

Social Odours in Mammals is encyclopaedic in its coverage, and supremely professional in its scholarly accuracy. The sixteen expert essays, which are arranged systematically, summarize what is known about the sources, kinds and uses of smells in each of the mammalian groups, and the circumstances of detection, and of deposition or release. The lengths of the chapters on the different groups vary with the amount of material. Rats and mice get one hundred pages, but armadillos are dismissed by R. E. Brown in a summary sentence: "nothing seems to be known about the role of olfaction in the social behaviour of the Dasypodidae". Areas for future work are identified, as they should be in a book of this kind. The book is written for specialists but it also contains innumerable curious facts to interest the non-specialist zoological reader.

Smells may come from several different places: lungs, guts, special skin glands (such as the morillo on the snout of the capybara), anus, and urogenital system. The smells are not just waste products, there are bacteria in the glands, which metabolize the matter about to be voided, giving it its characteristic smell.

The sources may be various. But the dominant – and memorable – parts of the text and illustrations are the images of excretion. D. W. Macdonald, for instance, relates how he tamed several vixen and took them out for nightly walks on a loose leash. In 112 outings, he saw one vixen urinate 1,283 times, typically on the ground or some prominence, in a "marked spatial pattern" around (but not beyond) the edge of the vixen's territory. Red foxes can distinguish their own urine from that of others, and can probably individually recognize other members of their group by the scent of their urine. Domestic dogs, however, "do not seem to use urine to maintain territories": they are not even territorial, which contradicts Konrad Lorenz's comparison between a dog's cocking its leg and a nightingale's song.

Horses, when left to themselves, live in groups of a stallion with a few adult females and their young. "Dominant harem males

usually respond to excreta of harem members", Patricia Moehtman tells us, and "in response to urination by adult females ($n=7$), the harem stallion urinated on the spot in 48 per cent of the observations". The Sumatran rhino, by contrast, is solitary, but it can advertise its position by the odour of urine. In a characteristic ritual, "both male and female Sumatran rhinos may squirt urine, with the spray being directed backwards for up to 6m".

Courtship recognition, and territoriality seem to be the three main purposes of urinary odours; but they are not the only ones. The "Bruce effect" of mice is a subtler competitive effect. It is reviewed here by Brown. In 1939, Hilda Bruce reported that female mice which were placed with a strange male within twenty-four hours of mating and left for seven to ten days had their first pregnancy blocked, came into oestrous, mated with the new male, and produced a new litter. "The response must be advantageous to the second male, as it enables him to produce more offspring. Apparently, the female responds to the new male's odour, for 'exposure to bedding soiled by strange males will induce the same extent of pregnancy block as the presence of an adult male'. The active compound is in the male's urine.

If most of the "social odours" of these books are urinary, not all of them are. The ring-tailed lemurs of Madagascar are equipped with special skin glands on their wrists and shoulders. The odours they produce are used to warn each other off. Male lemurs settle their disagreements, with civility, by means of "stink fights". They pull their tails forwards between their legs, and wipe them on their wrist glands. They then wave their tails over their heads, wafting the glands' odour towards their rivals.

Not all mammalian "social odours" are repulsive, though and their students do not only have to pore over stinking dung hills and sprays of urine. For cosmetics is united with natural history in these investigations. The preputial gland (a part of the urinary system) of the musk deer, in which it has grown to "the size of an orange", is the source of musk. Civet, as Shakespeare knew, is "the very uncleanly flux of a cat". And when the beaver mixes the discharge of its castor gland with its urine, it produces the medicinal cosmetic of renowned healing powers, castoreum. *Social Odours in Mammals* would only inform us that castoreum and civet are probably produced as territorial "Keep out!" signs, and that musk may frighten predators away, by mimicking the smell of a crocodile.

Sett in their ways

Hans Kruuk

ERNEST NEAL
The Natural History of Badgers
238pp. Croom Helm. £14.95 (paperback, 29.95).
0709918321

Interfere with the lives of badgers, and one touches a nerve of the nation – questions are asked in Parliament, government committees of inquiry are set to work. Badgers are ubiquitous in countryside that combines woodland and farmland, and Ernest Neal is the national expert on their habits, with fifty years of badger-watching behind him. *The Natural History of Badgers* is his third book on badgers, and like the two previous ones (1948 and 1977), does not attempt to address any specific questions about their evolution, or the way their numbers are regulated, or the reasons for their peculiar social organization in groups. It tells one how to watch the animals, it describes details of their appearance, the occurrence of albinos, the strange places in which badgers might make their sets. There are sections on social behaviour, on food, on reproduction, on urban badgers and on species of badger in other parts of the world.

Dr Neal's enthusiastic style, and the many photographs in this good-looking book, convey something of the excitement one feels when meeting a badger in a wood, or when watching them play around their sets. But scientifically badgers are much stranger than

als than this book might suggest. Watching them in the pasture, it is easy to forget that they are carnivores, and it takes hours of observation before one realizes that these rather large animals are feeding on earthworms. In Britain it is, of course, just this habit of feeding on earthworms in pastures which brings badgers in contact with cattle, and which creates such havoc in the herds when badgers carry bovine tuberculosis.

The Natural History of Badgers is one of a series produced by the Mammal Society, and would have provided an ideal opportunity to bring science to the naturalist. It claims to be a complete revision of Neal's previous badger book, but hardly touches a large amount of research on badgers which has been published in the last ten years. Most of the volume is an exact reproduction of the previous *Badgers* of 1977. Neal's sources are often casual comments from acquaintances, or an obscure draft for a PhD thesis, or fragmentary, unpublished reports without quantification. There is a drawing of a badger with a radio-harness, illustrating modern research – in fact, these things have not been used for many years (collars are much better). The recent scientific literature on badger population dynamics, feeding, social organization, scent marking, weights, food and behaviour in other countries, techniques for establishing the age of an individual, all this appears to have passed without making much impact on this book, although brief references are made to the existence of some of the papers. But perhaps I ask too much, and the book was really meant to be just some natural history and not heavy science.

Other grounds, other seasons

A. L. Le Quesne

MIHIR BOSE
A Maidan View: The magic of Indian cricket
179pp. Allen and Unwin. £11.95.
0047961198
CHRIS COWDREY and JONATHAN SMITH
Good Enough?
186pp. Pelham. £10.95.
0720716756
LEO COOPER and ALLEN SYNGE (Editors)
Beyond the Far Pavilions
159pp. Pavilion/Michael Joseph. £10.95.
1851450173
FRANK KEATING
Gents and Players
218pp. Robson. £8.95.
080513633

These are four books of very varying specific gravity, and the most substantial by some way is Mihir Bose's *A Maidan View: The magic of Indian cricket*. The reader must be prepared to take in his stride most of the first two chapters, which combine inaccuracy of detail ("Britons never, never, never shall be slaves" is not the refrain of "Land of Hope and Glory"; "muscular Christianity" was Charles Kingsley's idea, not Henry Newbolt's; Macaulay was neither a man of commerce nor an evangelist; etc) with insubstantial, tendentious and often incoherent generalization about the nature of British imperialism. But if he does so he will be rewarded, for this is a book which puts the remarkable phenomenon of Indian cricket into a clearer perspective, at least for the British, than any previous book known to me.

A Maidan View is an attempt to set Indian cricket in its social and intellectual context. There is an obvious comparison with C. L. R. James's *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), in that both are native-born interpretations for an English readership of what cricket has meant for Third World ex-imperial countries; and the interest of both lies largely in the way they bring out how, beneath the superficial universality of the game and the clichés about cricket as a builder of imperial and post-imperial bridges, it has in fact meant very different things for the societies in which it has taken root. Bose's book makes it quite clear that, if the social history of cricket is ever to be written properly, it will have to be on a comparative basis. In Britain the game is an organic growth with genuinely populist origins, and the commonplace that Test and county cricket are only the apex of a pyramid resting on the continuing strength of the game at club and village level throughout England still contains substantial truth: in India, so Bose persuasively argues, the structure is top-heavy, concentrating overwhelmingly on the immense glamour and wealth that surround Test cricket and Test cricketers and balancing precariously on a relatively weak (and almost entirely urban) popular base. (The contrast here with the game in the West Indies is stark.) The real support in India comes from the ranks of the socially mobile, newly wealthy and strongly nationalist "middle Indians", those children of midnight for whom the history of India since 1947 has been a success story; but there are also factors like the commercial advantage that dynamic firms have found in sponsoring the game, and Bose sees

the possibility of its popularity collapsing as quickly as it has risen during the last twenty years.

There is a great deal more of comparable interest in the book, including discussion of the ways, mostly unsuspected by outside opinion, in which the development of Indian cricket has been affected and often bedevilled by inter-communal rivalries (the treatment of the role of Indian Muslims is particularly illuminating); the critical analysis of the part played by Ranjitsinhji and the Indian princes in establishing the game in the subcontinent; and the contrasting sketches of the personalities and influence of the cricketing stars (the comparison with the Indian film world seems entirely apt) like the younger Pataudi, Gavaskar and Kapil Dev. Finally, the book will continually stimulate the thoughtful English reader to contrasts with the position of the game in his own country.

Chris Cowdrey's and Jonathan Smith's *Good Enough?* is a horse from a more familiar stable – the co-operation between a professional cricketer and a professional (or semi-professional, in this case) writer to cash in on a current reputation to float an autobiography; but it is not a run-of-the-mill book, rather it is an unusually interesting example of its genre. To begin with, it is not a ghosted autobiography, but a dialogue, with alternating chapters by the two authors. Jonathan Smith – Cowdrey's tutor at Tonbridge and now both his cricketing fan and his friend – is a novelist and radio dramatist, and his skills must have contributed a lot to the book's construction, which reads attractively as an interplay of two lively

Duffer amid the goons

Clancy Sigal

GEORGE PLIMPTON
Open Net
288pp. Deutsch. £10.95.
0233979816

North American ice hockey, which originated in the small farming communities of Canada, is now a big-money sport played, and fought, in rinks all over the United States, especially on the East Coast. Even more than professional gridiron football, it is legalized mayhem. In no other sport, aside from the Punch and Judy frolics of televised wrestling, are skullcracking brawls – which can start in the rink and go on among the patrons' seats – so much an intrinsic feature, approved by players and audiences alike. Yet "pure" ice hockey is full of grace, speed and agility. Its best players, like Bobby Orr and Wayne Gretzky, are international athletes on a par with Pelé.

George Plimpton, editor of the *Paris Review*, is no stranger to the rituals of top-level sport. In previous books, such as *Paper Lion* and *Shadow Box*, he has appointed himself "America's Number One professional amateur", penetrating – with a self-conscious clumsiness matched only by his courage – games like football, boxing and baseball. He enacts the dream of so many American men who, as James Thurber once said, often go to sleep striking out the entire batting order of the

characters. Secondly, the book is not really an autobiography at all, but concentrates on the cricketing events of 1984 and 1985 – the climax of Cowdrey's career so far, which witnessed his establishment as a regular member of the Kent side, his selection for the triumphant England tour of India and his subsequent appointment as captain of Kent for the 1985 season. It is not by any means the tale of a smooth path to glory – and all the better tale for that – and there is, throughout, the doubt epitomized in the title, the problem involved in following in the footsteps of a famous father. All in all, this is one of the vivid accounts of a professional cricketer's life that I have yet come across.

Beyond the Far Pavilions, compiled by Leo Cooper and Allen Synghe, a sequel to their *Tales from Far Pavilions*, is a collection of anecdotes about cricket in outlandish parts of the world. It has its moments, such as the (sadly outdated) judgment on cricket in France from *The Times*, "There are scarcely a dozen Frenchmen who play cricket, and most of them play it abominably", and the problems of playing in Finland with aluminium stumps which had to be hammered straight whenever they were hit; but the *longueurs* are numerous, futility is overdone and one senses a formula not quite good enough to bear repetition. *Gents and Players* is a selection from Frank Keating's writing on a wide variety of sports. The pieces are good journalism, shot on a wide aperture with a very fast exposure: brilliantly lit, all motion stopped, sharply focused and entirely lacking in the depth necessary to justify putting them between covers.

New York Yankees. In other words, Plimpton is a professional fantasist, a serious dabbler, who occasionally takes quite large chances with his not very agile body.

Open Net spans the years 1977, when Plimpton joined the Boston Bruins as a rookie goalkeeper, to 1985, when he played briefly with the Edmonton Oilers. His heart, though, is with the Bruins, an up-and-down team full of "goons" and "enforcers" – thugs on ice. "The function of the goon", Plimpton says, is to "cruise the ice outfitted with the instincts and inclination of the back-alley mugger". Often a goon is sent out to entice an opposing star into a fight and thus have him removed by the referees; the hockey authorities are notoriously slow, though, to put a stop to punch-ups, which are a significant part of the attraction for audiences.

By now there is a formula to Plimpton's "participatory journalist" sports books. He is the duffer, buffoon, the target of his teammates' jeering abuse but also the focus of their protectiveness. Gradually, by taking enough blows – in this case, usually by collapsing on his weak ankles – he learns the rudiments of the game and acquires the affectionate respect of the "Lunch Pail Gang", as the Bruins are called. In the Big Game against the Philadelphia Flyers he does everything wrong. But he is such an inoffensive, cack-handed hero it is impossible not to like him: above all, he is never afraid to make a fool of himself. In his few moments "in the cell" (at the net) against the Flyers, he says, "I stood in the cage, staring out at the empty rink, feeling lonely and put upon . . . a portrait of guilt and ineptitude". Fortunately, he is never called upon to do any actual hawling, and, as usual, he acquires himself with cheerfulness and honour.

Plimpton uses his physical innocence as a tutorial device. (He also keeps a foldback notebook concealed in the leg pad, of his forty pounds of goalie's equipment.) When in goal, we are told, it seems as if the puck, which can zip in at 125mph, is being shot straight at you. Nobody ever really wants the job of goaltender, though the toothless, scarred, broken-nosed survivors see themselves as gladiatorial elite. Through Plimpton's notes and second-hand stories we learn the myths of ice hockey, if not the reasons for its appeal or its financial structure. He is too nice and too loyal to his team-mates to describe ice hockey in anything except the terms of a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon. *Open Net* is a charming, entertaining book skating pleasantly on the periphery of the game.

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